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THE STORY
OF
OUR FATHER'S LOVE





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“What if I should lose them both!”

(p. 4.)

THE STORY OF
OUR FATHER'S HOME

TOLD TO CHILDREN.

BEING A NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION
OF THEOLOGY FOR CHILDREN.

BY

MARK EVANS

WITH DRAWINGS BY

M. G. M. D.

HENRY S. KING & CO., LONDON.

1876



"I did lose them both!"

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BY
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WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY

M. C. M^CD.



HENRY S. KING & Co., LONDON.

1876.

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141. m. 398.

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TO
THE GLORY OF
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN,
AND TO
THOSE LITTLE ONES, WHOSE ANGELS DO ALWAY
BEHOLD HIS FACE.



PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

To those who may read this book to children.

I WROTE the following pages originally for my own little ones. They are published in the hope that they may be of use in a wider circle.

I was urged to write them, because of a great difficulty that was felt, in meeting with any book which set forth with sufficient simplicity the good news of God.

It will be seen at a glance that I have not attempted to teach what is known as dogmatic theology. Whatever value may be attached to formulæ and creeds, as "bulwarks of the faith," there will be a general agreement that our religious teaching of children, must be an attempt to excite in their hearts love and reverence towards their Father in Heaven.

For this purpose, we need no other text-book

than the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The message which He brought is one which will go home to our little ones ; it will win their love and excite their admiration.

For this reason ;—that it is the news of a Father in Heaven, who loves for ever ; of a Son, who came to make manifest the Father, and to lead all men back to Him ; of a Spirit, through which (in the highest, truest sense) Father and Son are One, and receiving which, we may become one with both. In a word—it is the story of our Father's love.

If that be thought by any one too poor, too plain a Gospel, I own that to me it seems sufficient to save mankind ; to turn darkness into light ; to win all the love of our souls ; to give us strength and victory over sin ; to make us feel ourselves to be the children of God our Father, and heirs to the inheritance which Christ has gone before us to prepare.

Human relationships are sacramental in the education of the young. To children, the loving strength of a father, the tender sympathy of a mother, the helping hand of a brother older than themselves, are realities, and enable them to

appreciate and enter into those Divine relationships in which they share, and of which these earthly forms are but the shadow and the sign.

If this be so, a fearful responsibility rests upon us who are parents. We have to set forth in our daily life, nothing short of this—the character of God. If, by our want of discipline, our hasty tempers, our lack of interest and tender sympathy, we make the name of Father anything but a word that gladdens them and sets their heart beating with joy, we are offending those little ones for whom Christ died !

We cannot teach children without being taught by them. Their simplicity of character, their immediate recognition of love and gentleness, must move our hearts ; their keen sense of justice, their constant question, “ Is it true ? ” must shatter many a deception and lead us to satisfy ourselves, that we understand the grounds of our own faith ; must lead us daily to ask our Father, for more of that Spirit which will guide us into all truth.

I hope no one will think the familiar language used sometimes in this little book, is indicative of irreverence. I have tried to make God and Christ real to children. If I have only succeeded in that —if in any degree I have helped them to under-

stand what God their Father would have them do ; how Jesus the Son of God has given them the power to do it, something will have been gained—a few children of God will have been drawn nearer to Him and to each other as they grow in years.

Our earliest impressions and belief have a life-long hold upon us, and it may be, that a simpler setting forth of Christ's Gospel to the children of this generation, may tend to bind them and those who follow them in the cords of love—love that will prove the truth of God, as no creeds of human devising can establish it ; love that will set forth its power, by drawing all men to Jesus.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

LAST Christmas, I wrote the First Edition of this book, hastily, and without any anticipation of its having more than a very limited circulation.

The kindly reception it has met, and the valuable correspondence (from most different sources) it has brought me, make it my duty, in preparing a new Edition, to do what I can to make it more acceptable, more useful to children.

This object I have sought to gain, in the first place by a change of title—my first was unfortunate in this respect that its meaning was open to misconstruction:—my present title will more readily win a child's attention, while it equally well expresses the purport of the book.

Some new chapters have been added, and the original ones have been broken up into shorter divisions and paragraphs, with the view of making

the reading of them by children, more easy and attractive.

The sale of the book may, I think, be taken as proof that others beside myself feel the want of some simple religious teaching for their children; it will embolden me to make another attempt in the same direction.

M. E.

Christmas, 1872.

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THE STORY OF OUR FATHER'S LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

OUR FATHER'S LOVE.

I WISH I were better able to tell you about the love of the dear God in heaven. Believe me, He is a million million times greater, nobler, more thoughtful for you, more tender with you, than any words of mine can make you understand.

Think a moment, what He has done for you !

He loved you before ever the first sun rose in the morning, before the stars that lighten up the evening sky, had been set as jewels in the pavement of the glorious palace where He dwells.

How grieved was His loving heart, when His children forgot Him ! He sent them one messenger after another, to call them home ; by His own Spirit, He whispered to the hearts that were wandering and weary, "Return unto Me, I will have mercy upon you, I will abundantly pardon.

As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

And when all else failed, He gave up His own, His eldest Son, our loving, gentle brother Jesus Christ, to come and prove to us His Father's love, to lead us to His Father's home.

I have much to tell you, about the doings of Jesus upon earth; because in the life and death which our Elder Brother chose, of His own free will (just for the very reason that He knew it to be His Father's will), there is for us the greatest possible proof that we can have of the everlasting, unmeasured love of our Father in heaven.

Can you imagine what it means, for a father and a son to agree together, to bear long separation from each other and terrible pain, as God and Jesus did, for the sake of others?

Perhaps a story may help you a little to understand it.

On the borders of a dark and dreary forest in the east of Russia, there lived a peasant who had two sons. The younger of these had been, like the one of whom Jesus tells us in the parable, ungrateful to the father who had loved him, anxious only to have his own way.

Taking everything that could possibly be spared him, he had gone away to seek his pleasure in some large town, and no news of him had reached home for a long time.

His father and elder brother lived on together, cheerfully doing the work that each day brought them, never forgetting to thank God for His goodness, and asking of Him in their prayers this above all things, that one day the dear wanderer might be brought back to them.

It was a wild, dark night, and the two sat together by the fire. I don't know which howled the louder, the wind, as it came breaking through the branches of the pine trees, or the troop of wolves which, as usual at nightfall, were gathering in the neighbourhood of the village.

Between the crashes of hail against the window, there was a knock at the door, and a neighbour came in hurriedly, and looked round.

“Is he here?”

“Who?” asked the father and son in one breath.

“Thaddeus! your boy!”

The two sprang from their seats. “Thaddeus here? No! Have you seen him?”

“Ay, but a few minutes since,” said the neighbour. “He came past my house, so weary and ill that he could scarcely walk. I called to him, but he passed on, and I thought he was coming home to you, but!—” and the man dared hardly say what was in his mind, for the look of horror that was on the face of his listeners, “he must have missed his way, and gone into the forest!”

“The dear God in heaven help us!” groaned the father.

That was the only prayer spoken. He and his son did not stop to say many words. Their only thought was, how to save the lost one. But a few minutes' delay and it might be too late. At such times, work is a better prayer than words.

The two looked at each other ; their eyes spoke the same resolve, they had but one purpose, one will.

The elder brother must go out in search of the younger. The truant would have no fear of him, and could be assured that their father had forgiven all, that he was making all ready, and only longing for their return.

As the door opened, and the distant growling of the wolves made itself heard through the storm, the father clung passionately to his eldest son, as the fear flashed through him, "What if I should lose them both ?"

The son, taking a lamp with him, went out through the blinding hail into the forest, shouting every few minutes in the hope that his voice might reach his brother.

The father having prepared all, waited with a heart bursting with anxiety and expectation. The son who had just left had been his one companion and friend, always faithful to him ; he had been the light that had made their home (spite of losses and poverty) gladsome as a summer day. If anything should happen to him, the man felt that all happiness in life was gone.

A shout is heard outside, and in an instant he is at the open door. The form of the younger boy, all but lifeless, is half pushed, half thrown into the room.

And the elder, where is he ?

Quicker than the words can be written he is dragged backward by the crowd of wolves that had been pursuing them, and is torn in pieces before his father's eyes !

The shock of that night was greater than human heart could bear. The peasant lived long enough, to see his younger son restored to consciousness and health, and, what was better still, long enough to know that the boy's heart was turned again to his father.

And then, the man followed in peace the son whom he had lost on earth, to find him again, in the land where all noble deeds are rewarded.

We, every one of us, are like that son who was rescued and brought home again. Can we ever forget what it cost our Father and our Elder Brother to save us !

Think, then, every day you live, about the great love of God. Think about *it* and not about your sins, or about your soul. Leave them without fear, to the Elder Brother who died for you, to the Father who has promised never to leave you or forsake you. Let your one thought be of God's

love to you, and of how you may best do His will on earth.

A day of joy and gladness, will come for all His children who love Him, and try to do His will.

At the grand prize-giving of which I am going to tell you by-and-by, your dear Father will Himself welcome you home, and fold you with rapture in His arms. All will be glorious then. The brightness of the sun at noonday, will be as nothing to the blazing radiance of that world, where God is waiting for you amid ten thousand times ten thousand angels.

The brilliancy of the light will not blind you ; your eye will rest at once upon your Father, who sits upon the throne. You will tremble, not with fear, but with joy. As you feel that strong Fatherly arm close around you, as you rest your head upon that bosom more tender than a mother's, you will at last learn fully THE STORY OF OUR FATHER'S LOVE.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER AND CHILD.

YOUR earliest remembrance is of your father and mother. From as far back as you can call to mind, they have always been with you, joining you in your play, nursing you when you were sick, comforting you when you were in pain or trouble. All that made you happy, all that made the world seem bright, they gave you. They were ever ready to reward you for being good; they were sad and unhappy if you did what was wrong. Now and again they had to punish you, and you do not know how grieved they would be at having to do so. They would talk to each other about it, hope that you might be sorry, and make up your mind not to do what was wrong again. And if, as sometimes happened, you were still obstinate and passionate, they would send you away from them, or punish you in some other way. But whatever was done, was done only because they loved you so much, and knew that if you grew up acting

wrongly, and yet going unpunished, you would by-and-by become wicked and unhappy yourself, and perhaps make a great many other people so.

Being unhappy, and doing what is wrong, always meet after a time. You are never really happy when you have made your father and mother sad. Perhaps you have done something they told you not to do : you were not thinking about them at the time, nor of what they had said to you. You *did* enjoy yourself for a few minutes ! but afterwards how was it ? Your father and mother looked grave and sad ; they had told you many times before not to do what you have done ; so now you must be sent away, while your brothers and sisters are enjoying themselves. You do not feel happy in the room by yourself, do you ? You are more than unhappy, you are very frightened, when your father comes in to punish you ! He begs you to be sorry for what you have done, tells you how sad and unhappy you have made your mother and him. You see the tears start in his eyes, you remember how kind and loving he has been, and you think you will always another time, do what you are told.

But very likely your father has spoken to you like this often and often before, so now he is obliged to punish you, to make you cry long and bitterly, not because he likes to hear you cry ! No, indeed, he would far rather suffer the pain than

that you should ; but that would do you no good. He punishes you because you will remember his doing so, and that next time when you feel inclined to be naughty, you may say to yourself, " My father had to punish me before, for doing this ; I will not oblige him to do it again, I will not make him sad."

So you see how it is, that even when you really feel sorry for having done wrong, when you have promised not to do it again, your father has sometimes still to punish you. You have often been sorry before, often made promises to be good, but they have all been forgotten, and they would be forgotten this time too, but for the pain which you cannot help remembering. There is always pain of some sort, which comes of doing wrong, you may be sure. A great many children have no father or mother wise enough to teach them what is right and good, or to correct them when they do what is wrong. Do you think these poor children are not punished ? Indeed, as they grow up, they have to suffer far more than they would have done if they had been punished when they were children, and made to do what was right.

Try and think of this whenever you have been naughty, and your father is compelled to punish you. Remember that he does so, not because he is ill-tempered, and likes to see you unhappy, but because he loves you so much, that he will not

let you grow up disobedient, and passionate, and cowardly. Do not feel angry with him, but bear the pain you have to bear as bravely as you can.

There was once a little boy who had a very kind father. They loved each other dearly. One day the son had done something very wrong. He knew that he had, and that his father, because he loved him so much, was sure to punish him. So when his father came to him, he held out his hand bravely, and though each cut of the rod brought the tears into his eyes, he could still find voice enough to say to his father, "I can bear it from *you*, father."

How happy that boy must have felt when the punishment was over, and he was once again in his father's arms. The past all forgiven ;—the face that had looked on him sadly and sternly, all smiles and laughter. Nothing is said now about his having done wrong ; that is all forgotten ; but the boy still feels the pain, and as he feels it, he presses his cheek close against his father's, and thinks how kind and patient his father has been with him, and that he will always try and be good for his dear sake.

You often think of your mother as more tender, more gentle than your father. Many a time she has come to you with the tears running down her face, and begged and prayed you to be good. She has caught at your first half-hearted promise, and

encouraged you to confess all. You are more familiar with her than you are with your father. He is often from home during the day—she is always there, ready to play with you, gladly answering your every question. She will listen at night as you ask God to take care of you and make you good. She will come softly to your bedside and kiss you when you are sleeping, and often her bright look will be the first thing that your eyes open on in the morning.

But she cannot join your long and rougher games,—you want some one able to carry you, to run with you, and play without being tired, and so you are always glad when you can get your father with you, and you are not quite sure whether it is he or your mother that you love best. You say you “love both best,” and you feel that if away from either for any time, you would miss them very, very much.

God, though He has far more than all the strength of your father, is more tender and gentle than a mother.

He knows your every want and wish, before it makes itself felt by you. Even sooner than you can ask, He is waiting to give. Each little trouble you have to bear,—your disappointments, your difficulties with your lessons, are all shared by Him. So you may lay down your head upon His shoulder, and tell Him of all the little joys that

make your heart glad—of all the little sorrows that cloud over it. You may whisper to Him all your little secrets, just as you would to the sweetest, tenderest mother.

Your parents cannot always be with you. One day you must go to school, and then it may be a great many weeks before you see them again, or—you may find yourself alone in the world. Father and mother may have gone to heaven, brother and sister may be far away, there may be no one to love you, no one even to be kind to you ! Yet even then, you would not be alone. Shall I tell you why ? Because our Father in heaven would be with you !

Do you know whom I mean ?

God, who is the Father of us all. The Father of everybody in the world. The people in all countries are His children, in England and France, India and China. He made them all, He takes care of them, and wants them all to come to Him in His beautiful home in heaven. Our Father has even more children still. Far away, up where the stars are, there are ever so many children, living in a glorious place where they always see Him, and they love Him so dearly, that they would do nothing that He does not like.

In God's family in this world, there are naughty children as well as good, but He loves them all dearly ! When they do what is wrong, He has no

choice but to punish them, but it is only to make them good and happy. Even when He punishes, He will never do it roughly, if gentleness will make His little ones sorry and come back to Him.

A mother sat one day near the edge of a high cliff looking out over the sea. Her boy was near her, gathering wild flowers, when a butterfly started away from one of them, and in a moment the little fellow was after it, till he had come close upon his prize, resting in its flight on a piece of purple heather which hung down over the cliff. The mother saw the fearful danger the child was in, though he in the heat of his pursuit thought nothing of it. One step more, one hand only, stretched out to grasp the butterfly, and he would have fallen, to be dashed in pieces over the rocks! She would not raise her voice in anger, lest she should startle him, and he should go farther from her to his death, but she called his name in her softest, sweetest tone. The boy looked towards her, and as he did so, she held up something which attracted him, and her heart nearly burst with happiness as she saw him running towards her.

That is just how God our Father loves to manage His children. He sees them chasing some butterfly pleasure, something that they think beautiful, but which is leading them into terrible danger which they do not know of, though He does. If He were to call them roughly—if He frightened them—they

would take another step away from Him, and fall into the very sin from which He wants to save them ; but when He calls them lovingly and sweetly by their own name, they cannot help listening, and they steal back to His side, ashamed of themselves for having ever gone away.

If God has so many children to think about and to take care of, you may fancy perhaps that He has not time to attend to them all.

You forget how different He is from your earthly father and mother. They are often tired and weary ; He is never weary. They, like yourself, must sleep at night, but His eyes are never closed. They are sometimes poorly, perhaps cross ; He is never ill, He can never be *cross*. He watches lovingly over every one of His children, all through the day, all through the night, hearing everything they say, seeing everything they do. He smiles, and is glad when you are good and happy, He is grieved and sad when you do wrong. As you put your hands together at night and say "Our Father," He is listening to every word you repeat. Your mother kisses you and leaves the room, but God still waits: it is His sweet kiss on your eyelids that closes them in sleep, His kiss will open them once more in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

MORE ABOUT OUR FATHER.

Do you wonder that you cannot see God?

How was it you did not see your mother last night, when she came to your bedside and kissed you? Because you were sleeping, and your eyes were shut.

How is it that if your father comes to you in a room where you are wide awake, and the shutters are closed, that you do not see him? Because there is not light enough, you say. Now open the shutters just the very least bit. A little stream of light comes through—not enough to show you anything in the room, but if the sun is shining outside, you will see tiny specks of dust floating about in the stream of light. There is something even in the air, that you did not know was there! Open the shutters a little wider, very little. You can make out that there are things in the room, you can just see that there is some one standing there. As you push the shutter wider open and

wider till the full sunlight pours in, the form of your father standing there, grows clearer and clearer, and at last every book on the shelves, every picture on the wall, is as clear to you as can be.

Does that help you to understand how it is that you cannot see your heavenly Father though He is always close beside you? On earth, we are all of us, as it were, in a darkened room; but one day, little by little or perhaps all at once, God's angels will open the shutters. Then we shall see our dear Father's face, and shall never want to go away from Him again.

Think how He must love you, when He gives you so many things every day to make you happy. Wherever you go you see His beautiful gifts. The bright sun that warms you in summer-time, the birds that are singing when you wake in the morning, the soft green grass you play on, and every lovely garden flower! See, too, how all these things are ever saying "Thank you" to God for His love, and doing something for Him. He feeds the birds, and they sing to Him. He gives the flowers rain, and white snow to cover them when it is cold, and the flowers smell sweetly for Him. The stars shine at night to His glory, and as you peep up at them from your nursery window, they look "like little gimlet-holes to let the glory through" from the beautiful home where our Father lives.

I have told you that God is never *cross* with His children, but He is sometimes very angry. I want you above all things to understand the difference. You are cross now and then, ill-tempered,—the friends you expected to play with you have not come, you were going out, and the rain stopped you. Worse than being ill-tempered, you do and say unkind things to others. Now, our Father never can be cross in that way, but He can be very angry, and so should you be sometimes.

Suppose you saw a man trying to make a little child do something that would hurt it? telling it, for instance, to eat a thing that would make it sick—perhaps kill it! Then in truth it would be time to be angry! Suppose you saw a boy tying a little bird to a branch of a tree, so that a cat hiding in the shrubbery could get at it, you would feel angry with the boy, would you not? And so you should. So there are ways, in which our Father in heaven is made angry. A boy who did such a thing as that, should be well punished for being so mean and cowardly and cruel, in the hope that he would learn never to do it again. And God will punish you, or any of His children, who are cowardly enough to tell a lie, or mean enough to do what they have been told not to do because no one is watching them, or cruel enough to hurt those who are weaker than themselves.

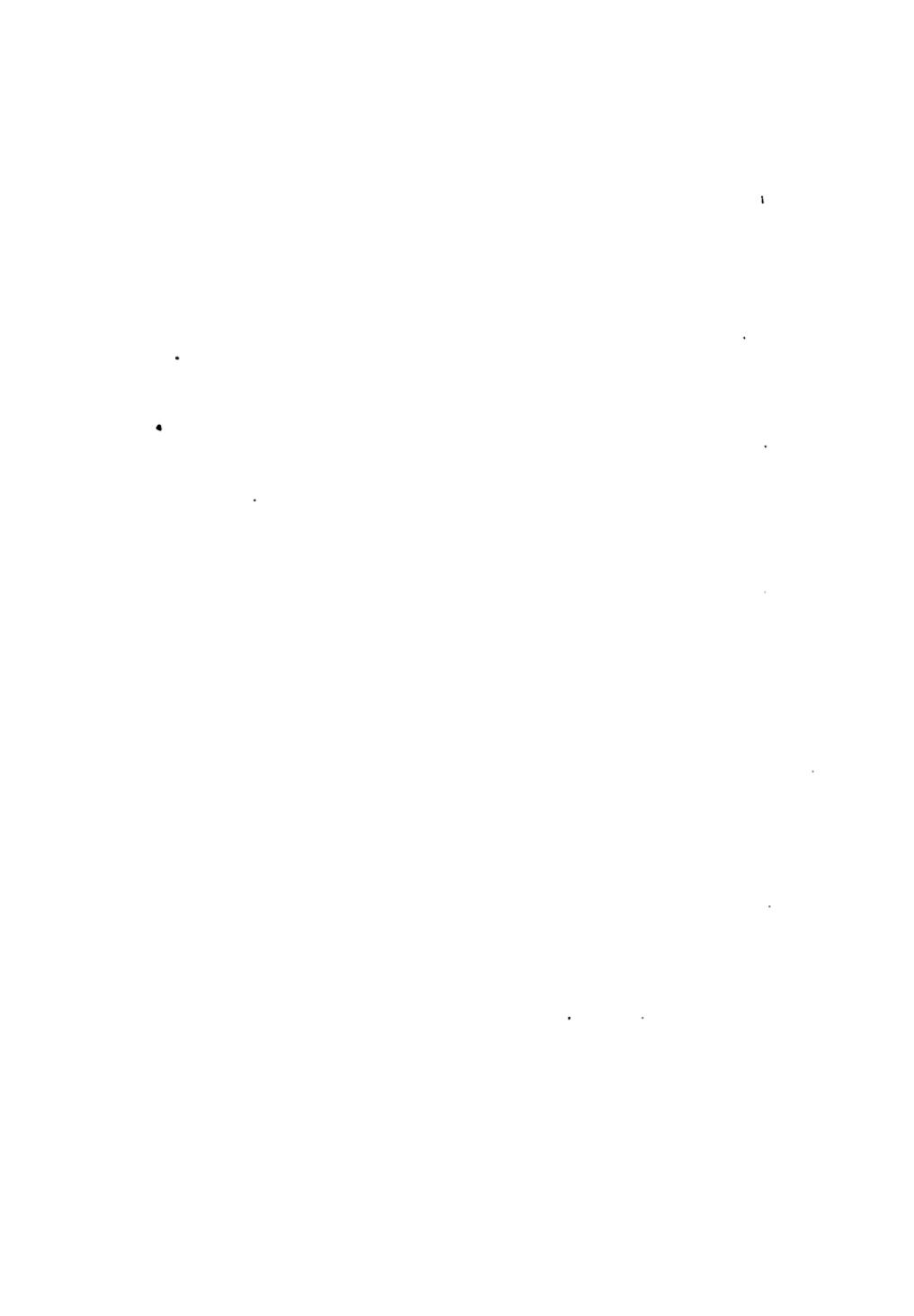
But never forget this, that God punishes you, not

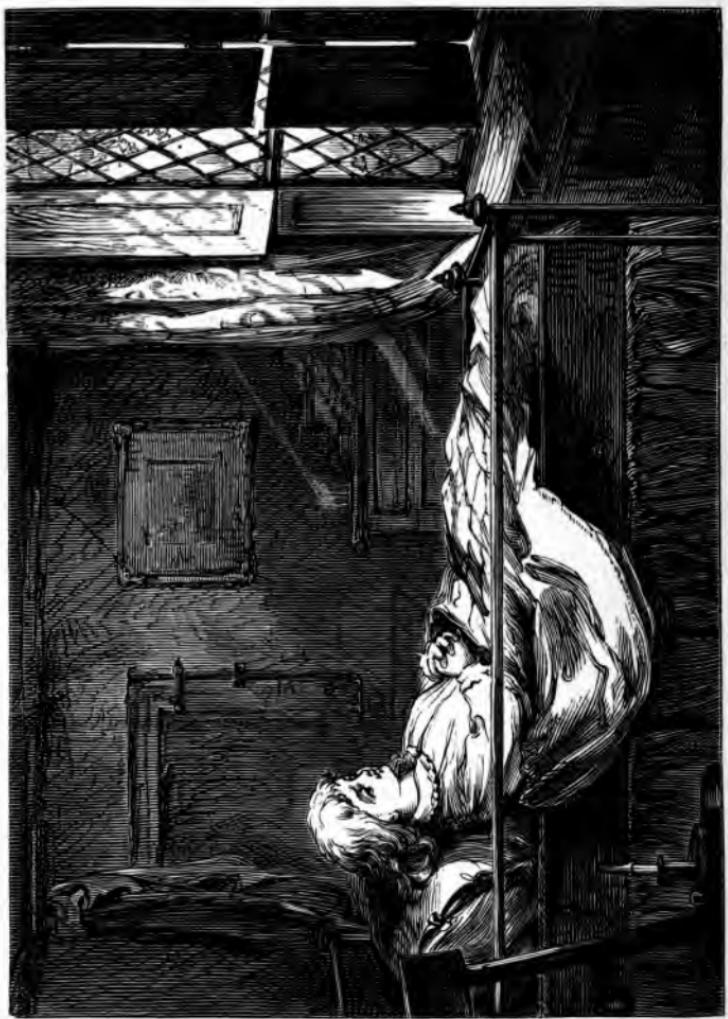
because He is cross and ill-tempered, but because He is angry at the wicked thing you have done ; not because He wants to give you pain—He cannot bear doing that—but that you may remember the punishment and never be mean or cowardly, selfish or cruel again.

Bear this too in your mind, that the moment you are really sorry for having done wrong and tell Him so, that very moment He forgives you. He will punish you, you may be sure, but be patient and brave when the time comes. You do not doubt the love of your father or mother, because they have to give you medicines, and to keep you shut up in one room when you are ill. So never let anything tempt you to doubt the love of your Father, God. When once He forgives you, you are forgiven for ever.

He will never say anything to you another day, about what you have done wrong and been sorry for, but you yourself will think of it, when you are home in heaven. When you are close to Him, and listening to Him as He tells you how He loves you, you will wonder how it was, that you could ever have been so foolish and so wicked, as to do anything that made Him angry.

The best possible way to be good now, is to think a great deal about your dear Father in heaven. He is always watching you, ever loving you, and taking care of you. When the father





and mother you love so much on earth are in the room, you would be afraid to do what is wrong. It is when they are away and cannot see you, that you often forget yourself and are naughty. But God is never out of the room ! So think about Him, and talk to Him, very often. In the midst of your play, He is delighted to see you so happy : why not thank Him, then ? And at night, when you are quietly in bed, and maybe a little star is looking in at your window, when all is hushed and still, talk gently, softly, to our Father in heaven. Tell Him how you love Him, for being so kind and good and patient with you. Tell Him how happy you have been in the day, and that you mean to try and do always what is right and true. Tell Him how sorry you are for what you have done that was wrong, and ask Him to help you to do better to-morrow.

You can never be afraid of anything, if you come to feel that our Father is always at your side. Is the room dark ? What of that ? He is there, and you are as safe as in the broadest daylight. As you grow older and become men and women, you may be in great danger. Perhaps, in a hospital where people are dying all around you with some terrible sickness. Or in houses where there has been wickedness and bloodshed ; where some of God's own children may be living far away from Him and hating those who love

Him. You may be in a ship when the wind is roaring and the water is dashing over it, threatening every minute to send it to the bottom. You may have to fight as a soldier for the honour of your country ; be badly hurt, left lying on the field in terrible pain when the fight is over. What if it be so ? Nothing can make you fear, as long as you know that God our Father is there beside you. The same dear One, that you learnt to love and talk to, in your cot, when you were a little boy, will be there to talk to still : and if you die, why, that only means that you would close your eyes for one little minute to open them again directly, to see your dear Father's face as you have often wished to see it, and to find yourself close within His arms for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

WAITING FOR NEWS.

DOES it not seem a wonderful thing, that though our Father in heaven always is and ever has been, so good and kind to His children, nearly all of them in the world should at one time have either forgotten everything about Him, or come to think of Him as something altogether different to what He really was ?

Yet this was so. Some, instead of praying to Him, used to pray to the sun and moon, as if they were living things and could help them. Others made figures of men or animals, in gold or brass or wood—some very beautiful, some very hideous—and knelt before these, asking their help. The men who had studied and knew much more than their neighbours, were looked up to by them. It was they who taught the people their religion—they were called Priests. They said there were a great many gods ; some few rather kind, but most of them cruel and wicked. These gods delighted

to punish men, to do unkind and spiteful things to them and to each other, and no wonder therefore that the people were afraid of them, and dreaded to go near them. Then the priests said, "We will pray to the gods for you, but you must make them presents, or they will be ill-tempered and do you harm." So the people brought gifts to the priests, which these latter kept and made believe that the gods had received them.

And because it was thought, that if they gave what they most valued, the gods would be best pleased, the worshippers would sometimes offer their little children to be burnt in the fire, fancying that their terrible screams would please the gods. Perhaps there would be a war, and one side was beaten: then the soldiers who had lost, would take the wife or child of their king or some great man, and make a sacrifice to the gods, in the hope that they would aid them in the next battle. Or there would come a great storm, spoiling the fruit-trees and the corn, and leaving little or nothing in the country to eat. This, it was thought, was because enough had not been given to the gods, so something very precious was offered them, in hopes of putting them in a good temper again.

Even if everything went well with the people, if they were very happy for a long time together, they would be afraid of the gods becoming jealous

of them, and so would throw away something that they valued, in order to make these deities more satisfied.

You may wonder how men ever could have come to believe such falsehoods as these, how they ever could have so far forgotten all about their Father in heaven. But you must remember that the thing had been going on for thousands of years. Little children had learnt what was false, and they grew up and taught their little ones the same, and so it went on through a weary round of years.

It was not so at first. If God's children had listened to what He said, if they had done only what He told them, they would always have kept near to Him, could never have forgotten Him. But they liked to have their own way—they inclined to please themselves rather than Him, and so did what He had told them not to do. Then when it was done, they were terribly afraid He would punish them, and instead of going at once to Him as children should do to a loving father, they ran away. The longer they stayed, the more they feared. They forgot His great love ; they were cowards, afraid of the punishment they knew they deserved. Little by little, they learnt to think of Him as some one who was going to punish them always, as some one who was really cruel, who actually took pleasure in giving them pain.

So naturally, they tried to get farther and farther from Him, to forget Him altogether, and in time were ready to believe all manner of lies about Him. Thus it was that they came to look upon Him as a bloodthirsty enemy, instead of an all-loving and tender Father.

Thinking in this way, the world grew more wicked, more unhappy, till God, who loved His children as well as ever, though they had ceased to love and care for Him, was too grieved to bear it any longer, and He sent one teacher after another, one in this country, another in that, to remind men of their Father, and to lead them back to Him.

They told people how it was they had gone wrong. They said, "You have been fancying that God was like yourselves, wicked and cruel, that He was glad to see you unhappy, and that unless you gave Him something He would not be kind to you." They said, "Like as a father pities his own children, so God pities them that fear Him. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," if only you will come back to your Father and ask Him to forgive you.

These teachers, or prophets, talked a great deal with people who were in trouble, with those who were prisoners and slaves. They cheered them with the assurance, that God their Father would one day send a great Deliverer, to rescue them



“The lost knowledge of a Father in Heaven.”

(p. 25.)

from their troubles, some one who would be very strong and yet very gentle.

But time went on, and people were very wicked still, and very unhappy. Some felt wretched because of their sinfulness, and longed and longed for one who would not only tell them how to be good, but help them to be so. Some began to laugh at the idea of praying to false and cruel gods ; declared there was no God at all, and that the best thing to be done, was to eat and drink and enjoy themselves as much as possible, because death would soon come, and then there would be an end of everything.

All this took place, in countries where there were grand houses and fine pictures, where many books were read, and much beautiful poetry was written, but none of these things brought back to those who enjoyed them, the lost knowledge of a Father in heaven. In other countries the people were still worse off ; they had no books, no one to teach them. They knew nothing at all about God, they fancied there were numbers of wicked spirits about them, always trying to do them harm. Through the air and on the sea, in caves and in woods, any strange noise that came, would terrify them, and make them implore the spirits not to hurt them. Things seemed going from bad to worse ; teachers of the truth had come, but little good had been done. It was as if a candle had

been lighted for a moment and then put out ; the darkness was darker than before.

All the true teachers, remember, had said the same thing. "There is only one God, even your Father ; you are His own children ; He is close to every one of you, not far away ; pray to Him, give up doing what you know to be wrong, strive to do what is right. The God who made all you see, is only good, is perfectly loving. You are miserable because you try to hide yourself from Him. Why should you fear one who loves you so ? Come back to Him and be happy."

These were something like their words, and a few listened and laid them up in their hearts. If it were only true, they thought ; but how were they to come near to God ? Who could show Him to them ? They cried to Him, and wearied for an answer. "Oh, if we could but see His face !"

Now, in one country all this time, people knew a great deal more about God than was known in other places. This country was called Palestine : it was where the Jews lived. God had sent them prophet after prophet to teach them the truth, and a great deal of what they taught was written in books, that every one might learn it or listen to it. God had been very good to the Jews.

The first of them, Abraham, He made great and powerful. Because this man did God's will, he was promised that one day there should be born

in his family, the one who would make the whole world happy and blessed.

Abraham's family lived in Palestine; but after many years, owing to food being scarce, they went to Egypt, which was a neighbouring country. Then after a time the Egyptians were very cruel to them, and made slaves of them.

At length God sent a great prophet to deliver them—Moses, who, you remember, was hidden by the water-side when a baby. He led the Jews out of Egypt, and brought them safely to the land which God had promised Abraham should be theirs. Once settled there, they began to forget the loving Father who had taken such care of them. They fell into the wicked practices of the people round about, and at last, like them, worshipped trees and animals and wicked spirits, instead of the one God who had made heaven and earth.

The priests, who should have taught them what was true, became worse than those they instructed; prophets came who told lies, and the one thought of priests and prophets seemed to be, how best to keep the people in ignorance of the true God, and how best to get riches and power for themselves. They were like shepherds that killed the sheep instead of taking care of them. "They neither healed that which was sick, nor bound up that which was broken."

You must not think that God was leaving His

poor children to themselves all this time. Every now and then there came a true prophet, who tried to call them back to their Father in heaven, but they would not listen, and deliberately chose to do what was evil, rather than what was good.

God loved them too well to leave them to themselves. They were His own dear children, He could not lose them. So He punished them very severely. He sent a great king with an army from a land not far off, who destroyed their towns, killed a great many of the inhabitants, and carried away the rest as slaves to his own city. They were miserable enough now! They knew well enough, how it was that all this trouble had come upon them. If they had not forgotten God their Father, if they had done His bidding, listened to His truth, He would have helped them, and they would have been free still. But they had despised Him and killed His prophets. They had given all their hearts to gods that were silver and gold; they had become like the gods they pictured to themselves—impure, deceitful, and covetous.

Every man wanted what was not his own. Each quarrelled with the other, and thus when a strong, united army came against them, they had no faith, no confidence in one another. They had so insulted God, that they dared not have confidence in Him, and they fell a ready prey to their conquerors.

These recollections must have made slavery still more bitter to the Jews ; and at length, in their sorrow, they again sought their Father in heaven and asked forgiveness of Him. He did not turn away from them. He has never turned, will never turn away, from any one of His children who is sorry for having done wrong. The moment His pardon was asked, prophets were sent to say that it was freely given ; that if the wanderers would only return to Him, in due time there should come a King and Deliverer, to free them from their enemies and make them dwell in safety in their own land. Many believed the assurance, and, while mourning their sin and foolishness, they patiently bore their punishment, and waited the coming of the promised Saviour.

CHAPTER V.

DELIVERER, KING AND SON.

YEARS passed away, till one day there came journeying from the town where they lived, to a little village called Bethlehem, a Jewish carpenter with his wife, whose name was Mary. They were tired when they reached the inn, and were in trouble to find it full, and no room left them in which to pass the night. Room there was none, but the stable of the inn was offered them, and there, rather than travel farther, they determined to rest. During that night there was a baby born, and Mary its mother laid it in the manger, that was soft and warm with the hay that the cattle ate.

That little baby-boy, whose birthday we keep on Christmas Day, was none other than the Saviour, for whom all the people I have told you about, were waiting. He was the Son of God, come to lead men back to their Father and His. He was to be their true Deliverer, and the King of the whole earth !

The babe, but little more than a month old, was brought by His parents to the Temple, where the Jews prayed and worshipped God. The name given Him was Jesus. In the Temple was a good old man named Simeon, one of those who had believed what the prophets wrote ; one who was longing to see, before he died, the long-expected Saviour. He took Jesus in his arms and thanked God, saying that the child would prove a light to the whole earth and the glory of his own country.

This was good news, was it not ? You remember how the world was in darkness and sin. Could this little child make it brighter ? The Jews were still governed, not by their own kings, but by strangers, often harsh and cruel. Was it possible that this baby, lying in Simeon's arms, could be their king ; could do anything to make them glorious ?

Mary heard all that was said, and did not know what to make of it. She thought a great deal about it, and no doubt had hopes, that her son might one day be really great. But she knew that whatever was God's will, would happen, and would be the best thing that could happen. With that she was content. She went quietly home to Nazareth with her husband and baby, and here Jesus grew up, learning a great deal, helping his father in the carpenter's shop, being kind and good to everybody, and enjoying the love of all.

When Jesus was about twelve years old, Joseph his father and Mary came up to Jerusalem, where a great festival was to be held ; Jesus came with them. Travelling was slow and tedious in those days, and when the feast occurred, people in the different towns formed parties and made the journey together to Jerusalem, in covered waggons drawn by oxen.

With one such party came Jesus and His parents. After a few days' stay, they started homeward. Jesus was not with them the first day, but they felt sure that He was in one of the other waggons with friends, and would be taken care of. They soon stopped for the night, and then, to their great sorrow, the little boy was missing. No one had seen Him, no one knew anything about Him !

They went back in haste to Jerusalem, fearing that in the streets, crowded for the festival, He might have lost Himself. He was not there. He was not in the market-place. He was not found playing with other boys ; but entering the Temple, His parents, to their infinite surprise, saw Him sitting quietly among the learned men there, listening while they explained the writings of the old prophets, and asking them questions about the passages, which He did not as yet understand.

His mother naturally might have scolded Him for having caused so much trouble ; but she remembered all the strange things that had been

said about Him, and she asked him softly, "Son, why have you behaved in this way to us? Your father and I have looked for you sorrowing."

The Boy gave her a strange answer. He said, "Why did you look for me? did you not know I must be doing my Father's business?"

What could He mean? His father's business was in the shop at Nazareth; yes, the business of His earthly father; but the time was coming, when He would have to leave His quiet home and go out into the noisy world to tell men about His heavenly Father, God; and it was to prepare for this, that He was learning all that He could of the truths which God had taught to the prophets, who had preached in old times to the Jews.

Neither His father nor mother understood the Boy's answer; but often and often they had talked over what Simeon had said. They had begun to see that Jesus was different to other children; that whenever possible, He would be studying the books of the prophets; that He was continually praying to God; that He was more dutiful, more loving, more gentle than any child in Nazareth; that He thought nothing about Himself, but only of God and other people; that He seemed only to have one desire, and that was, to do what was right, and to do it cheerfully. So home they went again happily to Nazareth.

When Jesus was about thirty years old, a cousin

of His, named John, older than Himself, came preaching to the people in that part of the country. Great numbers collected to hear him.

His words were just those of the old prophets. He said to the Jews, " You think that because you are Abraham's children, you can come to no harm. It is of no use that you are his children, if you will not do as he would have you do ! Give up everything that God's law tells you is wrong. Be dutiful, honest, kind, and loving to others ; and be content with what God gives you."

But he added this ; he said, " Give up your sins and turn to God, because a King is coming who will have no one for His subjects but those who set their face against what is sinful, and try to do what is right—a King who will know in one moment who is really wishing to serve and honour Him, and who is only pretending—one who will be King of the Jews, and will make His people glorious."

John was a strange, stern man ; he lived very plainly, and wore rough clothing. He was not what some would call lovable ; but the people felt that what he said was true. They began to be ashamed of themselves, to wish that they were ready to meet this King who was coming. Was He to be the Deliverer so long waited for ? Could John himself be He ?

While they thought thus, John said plainly to

them, “ I am not the King ; I am only come to prepare the way for Him. He will soon be here ! make yourselves ready to meet Him ! ”

Among the people who listened to this preaching, were many who were really sorry that they had forgotten God their Father, and done so much to displease Him ; many there were, too, who had not forgotten Him, but were waiting the fulfilment of His promise to Abraham, and looking for the King, the Deliverer, the Saviour, who should help them to overcome the enemies that oppressed them, the sins that wearied them, and should again show to them the glory of their God, as the prophets said it had been seen, in days long ago.

These persons gladly undertook to prepare for the coming of the new King ; and to show that from this time, they would forsake their sins and become His subjects, they were baptized, or washed, by John on the river-side. There was great excitement among them. Their nation had long been oppressed and trampled down. Now they waited for the One who, as they fancied, would bring back to them the greatness that was lost—a King who would lead them to victory, set up His throne in splendour, and make Jerusalem the grandest city in the world !

One evening, when John had finished baptizing, Jesus came along the river-side and asked John to baptize Him. John, who felt sure that Jesus was

indeed the very King and Deliverer for whom all were waiting, answered, "No, it is I who should be baptized by you!" But Jesus pressed him, and they both went down to the water.

As they came up the bank again, the clouds, that were gathered round the evening sun, parted for a moment, and Jesus looked up to the throne of His Father and of our Father; suddenly a dove hovered over Him, and through His heart there thrilled His Father's voice, "This is my beloved Son!"

There He stood, radiant as He listened to those words—God's Spirit stirring in His heart, making Him ready, making Him almost impatient to do all His Father's will. Ah! if the prophets who had died, many of them heart-broken, could have seen Him as the sunset bathed Him in its glory!

They had dreamt of Him day and night through a weary lifetime. One had told of a Deliverer who should rescue His people from slavery; another had prophesied of a King who should reign gloriously over the whole earth; a third had longed that the great Father in heaven, who so loved His children, would again show Himself to them.

All these thoughts and hopes had seemed past and faded as summer flowers. But now they were all to live again, now men were to enter into the full enjoyment of them.

Here was a Deliverer, who could save, not the people of His own land only, but everybody in the wide world. Here was a King, who should reign, not in one small city of the Jews, but in the hearts of all mankind. Here was the Son Himself, come with His own hands to lead the wandering children of His Father back to their heavenly home. Deliverer, King, and Son, Jesus the Christ of God, stood there in the twilight upon the banks of Jordan !

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM.

JESUS was now called by His Father to begin the work that lay before Him on earth ; but before telling you something about what that work was, I want you to understand why our Elder Brother was baptized that evening by the river-side, and why we, His brothers and sisters, are baptized too.

Moses had taught the Jews to be very clean in everything they did, and in the preparation of all they ate ; to be especially so with anything they brought to offer to God in His temple ; and a great part of the service which the priests carried on there, consisted in cleansing the sacrifices, and washing the basins and cups which were used during the ceremonies. As it was with the things made use of, so it was to be with the persons employing them ; all were to be kept pure and clean by frequent washing. If any one, even by accident, disobeyed one of the smallest commandments of the law—if, for instance, he touched an

animal that had died—he was considered unclean, until he had washed his clothes and bathed himself in water.

The Jews were not a people like us in England, who have new books to read every day, for indeed scarcely any one knew how to write in those times, and to make a book in the way it was then done, took a very long time. How, then, were the people to learn anything?

In this way :—God taught them, just as we teach very little children, by showing them pictures. Everything in their daily life, all their services in the Temple, were meant to teach them something ; and when you come to understand all the law given to the Jews, you will see what a wonderful picture-book it makes.

The washings that were to be practised in their own homes, the cleansings that were seen in the Temple, made them understand, not only how necessary for their health it was, that their bodies should be free from impurity, but that above all things their hearts must be so ; that is to say, that their lives must be pure and holy in God's sight. That they must not lie, or cheat, or steal, must not wish to have what did not belong to them, must not say unkind things about other people, and must remember that since God was perfectly pure and holy, so must they be too, if they would come near to Him, and live always with Him.

Even the best among the Jews, even those who really loved God, and tried to obey His law, were often doing something that was forbidden. Then it was, that after waiting till the evening, after showing that they were sorry for what they had done, they were bidden to wash themselves in water, as a sign that they were forgiven and again clean in God's eyes.

The water itself could, of course, do nothing more than cleanse their bodies ; God only could make their hearts pure, and so these continual washings showed them (as it were in a picture), not that any sprinkling of water could change their hearts or make them fit to come into God's presence, but that He in wonderful love had Himself pardoned and purified them, and now bid them wash in pure water, *as a sign and proof that He had done so*, to encourage them to feel that they might again draw near to Him as members of His family, as children of His love.

Many years had passed by, and the Jews had forgotten the lessons which had been given them. Many discontinued the frequent washings and the other observances which Moses had ordered. Some, and these the richer people who thought themselves most respectable, would not give up any of the customs of the old time ; indeed, they became more than ever careful of observing them.

But they forgot altogether the lessons that these

customs had been meant to teach. They washed their bodies and the vessels out of which they ate, as it was quite right they should ; but they never asked God to make their hearts clean. They would not sit down to eat without washing their hands, but they did not mind, while they were eating, saying unkind and wicked things about their neighbours. They were very attentive in going to the Temple services, and letting others see them saying their prayers ; but they thought nothing of returning to their houses or their shops, to lie and cheat till it was time to go again to the Temple !

It was with these persons, who called themselves the religious people, and who would hardly speak to others, that the prophets were so angry. They told them, it was of no use to be clean outwardly if their hearts were full of sin ; that though they might deceive their neighbours, they could not deceive God, because He saw into their hearts.

“ All these pictures that have been shown to your fathers and to you,” they said, “ these grand services in the Temple, these bowings, these coverings and uncoverings, this blood, this water, were only of use to teach you the lesson that God wanted you to learn ; how pure and holy He was, and how you as His children must be pure and holy too. You would not learn the lesson from these pictures ; now God has sent you prophets to teach it you in words. You call yourselves

religious people, but your religion is all a pretence and a sham. Religion is what should bind you close to God and to one another ; your so-called religion keeps you away from God, and allows you to do what is wrong to your neighbour.

“ True religion consists, not in going to the Temple services, but in doing kind actions to your poor friends and neighbours because God loves them—not in giving up eating and drinking, that others may see how much you respect God’s laws, but in forsaking sin, ceasing to lie, to cheat, to use angry words, to show bad tempers, in curing yourself of the habit of saying and doing unkind things to others.” All that seems rather harsh to you, perhaps ; but the prophets did not stop there.

They went on to say, “ Only confess how impure, how sinful you are ; only be sorry for the past ; only turn again to your dear Father in heaven, and ask Him to make you pure—fight manfully against what is wrong in the future ; then listen to God’s message to you : ‘ I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.’ ”

God our Father, you see, was as full of love as ever. He must punish His children if they did

wrong ; but the moment they were sorry, He was so merciful that he forgave them.

It was with such a sermon as the old prophets preached, that John stirred up the hearts of the people who went to listen to him in the wilderness.

They had said, "Wash you, make you clean ; cease to do evil, learn to do well ; for the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob."

John came crying, "The Redeemer is at hand, the King is coming, make yourselves ready !"

Those who believed him, those who trusted God's promise to save them, he baptized or washed by the river-side. He meant that they had confessed their sins, had promised to serve God and keep His commandments, and their baptism spoke to them like this : "You are God's ; He has accepted your sorrow, He has pardoned your sin."

But you will say, perhaps, "Why, then, was Jesus baptized ? Was He sinful ? Did He want cleansing ?" He could not, because He had always lived close to His Father. All His lifetime He had only sought to do God's will, and had never let a sinful thought stay for one moment in His heart.

Jesus, then, had no sins to confess ; He could not want cleansing ; but He was a Jew, born of Jewish parents in a Jewish country, and He ever paid reverence to the customs which God had appointed ; so when John hesitated to baptize

Him, He pressed Him, because He said, He had come to do all things that were written in the law.

There was another reason, I think, why Jesus was baptized. The Jews were looking for a Saviour who should free them from their Roman masters, for a King who should sit down upon His throne in Jerusalem. Jesus was indeed Saviour and King, but in a far grander way than His countrymen had any idea of. He was going to save the world from its sins ; He was going to set up His throne in every pure and lowly heart that would receive Him.

Now He intended to continue this practise of washing with water, this baptism, as a proof that God had freely forgiven those who received it, and made them holy ; and further, it was to be to all people, a sign that they were Christ's own disciples or servants ; that they were children in the one family of God, our dear Father in heaven.

See, then, what a great thing your baptism is ! It is not a piece of magic, it is not something that finds you black and leaves you white. It is as far above all that, as heaven is above earth.

It declares that you are God's own little child, that His Holy Spirit is in your heart, and always has been ; that if you will only follow its whispers, you will grow to be like Jesus, and share in all the glory that He has now received from His Father.

It declares that Jesus is your Saviour and King ; that He will save you from your selfishness and sin, and save you to the end ; that you are bound to serve and honour Him ; that you are His soldier, under promise to fight for Him till the end of your life comes, and with His own hands He places on your head a crown of victory.

So it was, that before He went back to God, Jesus sent His friends out into the world, to tell men the glad news which He had brought them, and to baptize every creature. There is nothing which Jesus has told us to do, but He did it first Himself ; thus He, the Son of God and our Elder Brother, was baptized that He might say to us, " Do as I have done ; do it because you love me ; do it as proof to men that I am your Saviour and King."

It was because He was Saviour, that He was to be King. In return for His perfect obedience to His Father, in return for all that was given up, when He left that wonderful home of His in heaven and came to spend a weary three-and-thirty years on earth, God gave to Him a Kingdom.

Though God awarded Him so great a prize—it was Jesus Himself that won it. Won it, by that boundless pity and love shown to His wandering brothers and sisters ; won it, by that kindly hand of His outstretched to lead them safely from this earth to heaven.

His Kingdom was to be in the hearts of men. Was it any wonder if it were so ?

You may have heard, how when the slaves in America were made free, they were, some of them, almost ready to worship the President to whom they owed their liberty. They fought for him to the death ; they looked to him as a saviour. He was in truth a king to them, though he wore no purple, and sat upon no throne. His Kingdom was in their hearts.

And shall not we, who by baptism were declared the free children of our Father, acknowledge as our Saviour, Him who set us free ? Shall we not honour Him as our King ?

It were worse than cowardice to forsake Him, to refuse to follow Him in the battle which we have to fight against the temptations that surround us, against the misery and sin that is in the world.

That battle must go on, till all the kingdoms of the world, until all the hearts of men, have become the Kingdom of Christ.

Then the glorious end will come, when Jesus will be able to look back upon all that He suffered at the hands of men, and be altogether, perfectly satisfied. Satisfied, because then He will see the whole family of God, gathered by His own hands, in that golden city which needs no temple, nor the light of sun or moon to lighten it.

The triumph of Jesus in that day, will be of all

His triumphs the happiest and greatest. Yet in one way, it will be like all the victories that went before.

What were all His triumphs upon earth, but the complete forgetfulness of Himself, in the desire to give glory to His Father?

So it will be then. Surrounded by His family from earth, by the whole race of man whom He freed from bondage and will have then brought back to the Father and to the home that they had lost, He will present them as his Kingdom, faultless before the throne of God, saying, "Father, Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me. Unto Thee, do I deliver up the Kingdom, that Thou mayest be All in All!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPIRIT OF OUR FATHER.

YOU remember, that as Jesus came up from the water, a dove fluttered over Him, and the voice of His Father whispered, "Thou art my beloved Son."

He had known full well before, that He was God's Son, because the Spirit within Him sought after God, and had always urged Him to do God's will. But here was His Father's own voice calling to Him as His Son ; here was this soft, tender little bird that seemed to bring Him a message, as it were, from the sky above Him, an angel from heaven to cheer and to strengthen Him. He knew that the path on which He was starting would be a sad one ; that His countrymen whom He longed to save, would hate and despise Him, when He, the poor carpenter's son, claimed to be their King.

He remembered how cruelly used had been the prophets who came before. He had read, in His quiet home at Nazareth, of Elijah fleeing for his

life, of Jeremiah standing before the princes, while the priests shouted, "This man is worthy to die!" and the lonely and painful life before Him may well have chilled His heart, and led Him, as it did later, to pray to His Father to spare Him, if it were possible, the great sorrow that He suffered.

The answer to all this came just when it was most wanted. God knew how Jesus, of His own free will, would choose a life of sorrow and a death of pain, that He might lead men back to the Father they had lost, and so before He entered on that life, God sent to Him this visible token of His love, and with His own voice stirred up His own Spirit within His Son.

How that voice must have gladdened the heart of Jesus! Have you ever been left in darkness where you were frightened? or in some dangerous place, where if you had made a wrong step you would have fallen and hurt yourself? At that very moment, your father's voice or your mother's was heard, "Don't be afraid, darling, I am close beside you!" Did not those words make you feel brave again, even joyful and happy? All that and ten thousand times more, God's voice was to Jesus, and it made Him, as you will see presently, brave and strong in the troubles that were close at hand.

Here, then, was something that Jesus gained at His baptism: He had done His Father's will, and

this was the reward. He had honoured God by observing His law on earth, and now He had received honour from God in heaven.

The voice which Jesus heard was the voice of God's Spirit within His heart. It is that same Spirit which, as the greatest gift Jesus could gain for men, He did gain, by His life and death on earth.

It was not that God had left men altogether without His Spirit, before the coming of Christ. There had been good men in all countries, you remember, who sought to know God, and to learn the truth about Him. They were guided by His Spirit, and some of them got very near to Him. But few of them, very few learnt really who He was. The rest were like "children crying in the night, and with no language but a cry."

And to these children, wearied with disappointment, came Jesus, bringing as His own gift, a spirit which taught them to call the great God, whom they had hardly dared to approach, "OUR FATHER"!

Mind you, it was just because they were children of God, just because Jesus was the Son of God and their brother, that the Spirit which by Him was sent forth, taught them to call upon *a Father*. They had cried before now to sun and moon, to birds and beasts, to spirits which they fancied were in the air and sea and woods ; but this Spirit

which Jesus brought them, the Spirit of the Son, led them to recognize in the Almighty one whom they had so long feared and dreaded, a gentle and tender Father, who only waited to fold them in His arms. Their own sin and the spirit of evil had made them afraid of God, with the slavish fear which a dog has for a cruel master ; the Spirit which Jesus gave, encouraged in them the simple, trusting love which a child should have for its parents.

Do you know what it is to have the spirit of Jesus ?

If you saw a boy hurt another by accident, and the one so hurt turned round spitefully on the other and struck him, you would say, what a revengeful spirit he had. If a man were seen illusing a horse or a dog, you would say, what a cruel spirit must be in that man !

In the same way, if any one is kind and gentle, thoughtful for others, always ready to give up his own way and his own pleasure, patient when he is provoked, answering kindly when he is spoken to roughly, brave and fearless in danger, making what is around him bright and happy, striving to honour God in all he does, praying to Him, and asking His help every day, you may be sure that that man, woman, or child, has the spirit that was in Jesus, even the Spirit of God.

With that Spirit striving in his heart; the man

must grow more like Jesus. He may often fall, often do what is sinful when he is tempted, but, be sure of it, he will not sleep until his sin is pardoned by our Father in heaven. He will be baptized over and over again, not in water, but with his own tears. The tears cannot wash away his impurity, but they will be to him the sign that all that impurity *has been washed away*, because of a Father's love declared in His Son Jesus Christ.

You often feel inclined to do what is wrong, do you not? If you were to encourage the thought, you would soon become deceitful, selfish, and cruel. It would lead you from one thing to another, till you became afraid of God your Father, and ran into deeper, darker sin, in the hope of escaping from Him.

Give no ear but to the voice of God's Holy Spirit. You will hear it very often. You may be alone in a room. There is something there, you have been told not to touch. You begin looking at it, you long to touch it. You are just going to do so, when in a moment, there comes, you don't know from where, something like a voice that says, "Don't touch it, it would be wrong!" Ah, you thought you were alone, but you are not! Your Father, God, is watching; it is His Spirit in your heart that you hear.

Always listen to that voice, and do as it bids you. Every time you do so, you will bring a smile

of love on the face of our dear Father in heaven, and you will make the heart of Jesus leap for joy. Always pay attention to it, and as you grow older it will sound more and more clearly.

By-and-by, when you have grown to be a man or woman, there will be times when you hardly know what to do, which way to take. The night may be dark, the way may be slippery, but you need have no fear. If you have obediently followed the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, the same voice that has spoken to you so long, will say, in a tone that you cannot mistake, "This is the way, walk ye in it." The road may be long or short, bright and sunny or dark and cloudy, but be sure that, whichever it be, it will bring you safely to our Father's home.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTIVE AND FREE.

You have seen how Jesus was strengthened and encouraged by God, before beginning the hard work He had set Himself to do. You might fancy He would have been anxious to go at once into the world and tell men of their Father in heaven. Instead of this, He went away into the wilderness, and prayed.

John had lived there a great part of his life ; he was a hardy, rough man ; he ate the simplest food and drank nothing but water. He did not care to have people about him, he liked to be alone with God in the desert, till when God's Spirit bade him, he came along the river-side and taught the crowds that gathered to listen to him.

The life of Jesus had up to this time been very different. His had been a bright, happy home, made so by loving parents, friends, and relations. As a boy, He had had plenty of companions of His own age, and many a time the streets of the

little town of Nazareth echoed with their laughter as they ran home from school. Growing up to be a man, His life had been a cheerful one. There was His daily work to occupy Him ; there were the old sayings of Moses and the prophets which He loved so much, to think about and learn. There were His mother, with her fond love of Him, and brothers and sisters for company.

He tore Himself away from a place in which He had been so happy, and went into the wilderness, where there were no friends to speak to, no house to live in, no food to eat. He went there, that He might be quite alone for a time with His Father, God ; that He might pray to Him without interruption, talk much with Him, and think over the work which He had undertaken.

The carpenter's tools were laid aside, the noise of the workshop was hushed, the music of his mother's "good night" sounded no longer in His ears. He was alone with God. Day after day, night after night passed, and found Him still praying, still thinking. He had forgotten how the time went, His only thought was about His Father, and how He could bring men back to Him.

While He was thus preparing Himself, God was strengthening Him for a great battle with a strong and wicked enemy, an enemy so powerful that no one had yet been able to conquer him.

Do you know with whom Jesus had to fight?

Different explanations have been given of this battle that Jesus fought in the wilderness, but God alone can explain the whole truth about it ; but I am sure that as you grow older and come to understand all that *selfishness* means, you will see that there was nothing for it, but for Jesus to fight. I must tell you a story which some good men think made the battle necessary. *This much is certain,* Jesus was more than conqueror.

Well, then, long before there was sun or moon, summer or winter, rain or sunshine in this world, God our Father lived, as He ever has done, ever will do, in heaven, bright and good and glorious, with thousands of thousands of angels whom He had made, loving Him and doing His will always.

These angels He did not treat as slaves, *making* them do this thing or the other, but He dealt with them just as He does with His children on earth. They knew His will, and He left them to do it freely out of love for Him.

Some, sad to say, began to think more about themselves than they did about God ; and no sooner had they done that, than other evil thoughts came into their hearts. They wanted to do their own will instead of God's ; they became envious of each other, and even of God Himself !

God was obliged to punish them, as you know

He has always to punish His children who do wrong. He sent them away from Him—away from all that they had loved in heaven ; no longer could they walk along the golden streets, or join in the hymns of praise that were sung around His throne.

And ever since, those angels have been sinning more and more. They were disobedient, and then they were afraid. They ceased to think of God as their Father ; made up their minds to believe that He had been harsh and cruel. Little by little they grew worse, till at last, dreadful as it seems, they hated Him, and tried to do Him harm.

Up to this hour those angels have never confessed their fault ; up to this hour they are away from God. Before ever they can come back to Him, you may be sure that our Father and theirs, must visit them with some fearful punishment !

Most richly do they deserve it, for not only have they been hating God, but they have been whispering lies about Him to His children on earth. These once were without sin, loving God, and doing as He bade them ; but a time came when they fancied their own way better than they loved their Father's will. They did wrong over and over again, and God punished them for it, but, instead of being sorry, they grew like the wicked angels, self-willed, and proud and disobedient, and their own hearts were ready to believe what the evil

spirits said to them. "God is harsh and cruel, don't go near Him, He will only punish you. What is the use of praying to Him? He will not hear you, He will not help you."

You have seen how, as time went on, most of the people in the world accepted these lies ; how they forgot all that was true about God, did all kinds of cruel and wicked things, and prayed to evil spirits because they were terribly afraid of them.

Yet to every one of these sinful, wandering children, God had given His Spirit ; but instead of hearkening to its voice they had listened to themselves and their own fancies. The evil spirits to which they prayed and of which they thought, as living in the earth and sky and sea, were in truth in their own hearts and dwelt there ; and just as you saw how people who tried to do God's will, who thought a great deal about Him, and attended to the voice of His Spirit, grew more and more like Him, so you can easily understand how those who allowed wicked spirits to remain in their hearts, who thought about them, talked to them, prayed to them, became more and more wicked themselves.

Thus it was that the world had gone from bad to worse. The true God was forgotten. Sin seemed triumphant ; it was as if it had built up a throne on earth, and set God at defiance ; a spirit

of cruelty, of falsehood, of impurity, held the place that God's Holy Spirit should have held in the hearts of men !

Though God's foolish, sinful children had let sin get power over them, they felt very often that it was a cruel and a harsh tyrant ; what it encouraged them to do, did not make them happy. They felt that after all they were but its slaves, and their hearts sunk within them sometimes, when it flashed upon them, "Perhaps we are slaves for ever !"

Every now and then, amid these sad thoughts, came a voice, the voice of God's Holy Spirit, which had never left their hearts—the cries and shrieks of evil spirits had nearly drowned it, but sometimes it *would* be heard, though it was but faint,—like a whisper coming over mountains of sin and wickedness—"Why not break away from this cruel slavery ? Why not go back to God ?"

Prophets came and said the same thing. "Sin is not your true King, it is a usurper ; tear off the chains with which it has bound you, and acknowledge God as the true sovereign of your hearts."

Most people heard all this, as if they were in a dream. Evil spirits had sung them to sleep ; but many were aroused. They sighed, and wished "Oh that we could be free ! Oh that we could go back to God !" But who would deliver them from the chains of their sin ? Who would show God

to them ? They heard of Him as a King, but they had rebelled against Him, and kings of the earth only killed and destroyed those who disobeyed them. Would the King of heaven be different ? They heard of a Deliverer ; but would He trouble Himself to deliver *them* ? Perhaps He might deliver the princes and nobles and the great men of the earth ; but as for them, they must be too poor for Him to care for, too mean even for Him to think of.

The thought, you see, even of a Deliverer could hardly rouse them ; the thought of a King only made them afraid. Prophets and teachers had failed ; it was necessary that *a son* should come, *the eldest Son* of God, because He only could tell them of His Father and their Father, of the unchanging love which He had for all His children, and how He longed to bring them back to Him.

Thank God He had come at last ! Sin had made itself a tyrant in the world, but here was the strong One who had come to overthrow its kingdom. Evil spirits had made slaves of men, but here was the Deliverer who would throw off their chains, who would give to all men power to forsake sin, to abandon bad habits and tempers, to live as God's dear children by the help of a Holy Spirit, loving, trustful, and free. The Son would make them free, and they would be free indeed !

CHAPTER IX.

THE BATTLE THAT JESUS FOUGHT.

BEFORE Jesus could set men free, He needed to overcome the power of every evil spirit and every sinful inclination that had helped to enslave them. He went into the wilderness that sin might do its worst on Him. In solitude, loneliness, and weariness, fierce temptations would be sure to suggest themselves. If He could not conquer these, if He once yielded to any single one of them, how could He hope to deliver His brethren on earth from their power?

Never forget that Jesus was of like passions with ourselves ; that He knew what hunger and thirst meant, just as we do ; that He could be weary, low-spirited, and sad ; that He would much rather have made friends than enemies ; that in doing God's work, He had constantly to struggle against the weakness of His nature, the inclination to rest rather than to work, the suggestions that were made to Him to use His power as

the Son of God, and instead of coming to men in poverty, meekness, and self-denial, to order bands of angels from heaven to punish those who would not acknowledge Him as their King.

He was by Himself in the desert! Far from His home, no mother's voice, no brother's or sister's, to say one loving word. He had been days and nights without food. He was well-nigh wearied out and fainting! The evil thought came, "*If* Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread!"

Jesus must have been startled.

It was not, that He had not heard a voice such as this, before. He had not been without temptation as a boy; but there was something horrible about it in this perfect stillness, and when He had thought Himself alone with His Father.

"*If* Thou be the Son of God!"

Jesus knew that He was. He had known it when He walked by Mary's side, when His hammer was heard in Joseph's workshop. He could never doubt that he was the Son of God while the memory lasted of that evening by the river-side, and the white dove nestling to Him.

He might from the very first have shown to the world His God-like power. He might have come forth hidden in a thunder-cloud, and with the lightning for His sword have destroyed all who opposed Him. But Jesus had come not to

destroy men, but to save them ; to show them God's love and tenderness, and to lead them to the Father from whom they had gone so far astray.

He had come on earth, not only the Son of God, but the Son of Mary, that He might have exactly the same weak body that we have, suffer every trouble, every temptation that we have to bear, in order that He might overcome them by the Spirit of God His Father, and having gained for us that same Spirit which made Him a conqueror, might make every one of us His brothers and sisters, conquerors too.

“Command that these stones be made bread !”

There could surely be no great harm in that. Jesus was faint with hunger, and far from home. He might have had food enough and to spare if He had only used the Divine power. He could have been supplied with everything, had He but called to His Father. It was because of this that the temptation was so strong.

It was as much as to say, “See if you can do something. You say you are the Son of God ; how can that be ? You are worn out, and fainting with hunger. Is that the way God leaves His Son ? Have not men truly told that He is harsh and cruel, when He will not even give you bread ?”

The struggle in the heart of Jesus was a bitter one, but He answered very firmly and quietly.

"Am I to believe that children of God live only to eat and drink? · No; they live to do their Father's will. I am here in the place where God would have Me be; His Spirit bid Me come here, and If I die of hunger, God's will be done."

You see, He would not answer the "if." He was so certain that God was His own dear Father, that the same Spirit was in them both and made them one, that nothing should induce Him to take notice of such a sneer.

In a moment the scene before Jesus was changed.

He seemed to be no longer in the wilderness, but standing high on the pinnacle of the Temple in the busy city of Jerusalem. Below Him, He could see the squares and streets, and the people as they passed along. He was at a height that might well have made Him giddy to look down from, for with a single false step He must have been dashed in pieces.

The thought came, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' "

The evil spirit was trying again, and began with the same sneer as before, "if," for that, no doubt, had wounded Jesus to the heart. "Cast Thyself down." As much as to say, "It is a very easy

thing to *say* you are 'the Son of God.' Who believes it? Do you think those people down in the street there will believe it? Are you different to any one else? If you are, prove it. Throw yourself down! God will surely take care of His own Son! and then every one will see that you are what you pretend to be!"

Jesus stood gazing into the street. Below, were the people He had come to save. He was about to go to them as the carpenter's son from Nazareth, and ask them to accept Him as the Saviour and King of Israel! He felt too sure of what was coming; He knew that His countrymen would laugh at and mock Him. Over and over again this terrible temptation that He was struggling with, would meet Him. You remember how the priests and the people said afterwards at different times, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" "Whom makest Thou Thyself?" "Show us a sign, that we may believe in Thee!" "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him!"

It must have crossed the mind of Jesus, how different it might all be, if He did as the selfish thought bid Him. He had only to pray to His Father, and God would have sent a whole army of angels, in the midst of which, His Son might have descended safely to the ground, and entered Jerusalem in triumph as the promised Deliverer

and King of Israel. The priests and the great men and the religious people would have come in procession and paid court to Him in the hope of reward ; incense would have been waved before Him, flowers would have been strewn along His path, banners would have waved, trumpets would have sounded ; amid shouts of triumph He would have passed through the city, and sat down on a golden throne in the house of David !

Was not all that more attractive than the life Jesus had chosen for Himself ? Poor and despised, often hungry and without a place to lay His head, He used sometimes to say that the foxes and the birds were better off than He !

But Jesus, you know, had come to earth not to please Himself, but to do His Father's will. Not to be a King like David, conquering His enemies with the sword, but a King ruling with resistless love in the hearts of all men, in all lands, in all time. The sword could destroy men's lives, it could not drive out the wicked spirits from their hearts, and in the place of these, bring the Spirit of the Son.

There was but one way in which that could be done. Jesus must show how the blessed Spirit of God gave Him power to conquer sin, and every temptation that could happen to Him ; and how, because He did so conquer, God would bestow on Him the power of giving to all His children the

Spirit of the Son, that they might look up to the great God as their loving Father, that they, like Jesus, might always keep near Him, to do His will and not their own ; live a life of lowliness, gentleness, and love, not thinking about themselves, but doing good to others, and giving glory always to God.

So Jesus sternly met the temptation with, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." "True, He has promised to be near to every one of His children, in danger, when He allows danger to overtake them ; but He can never be pleased if they run into danger just that they may show off before others, and let it be thought that God's children may do anything they please."

As Jesus spoke, the evil thought vanished. He had conquered a second time !

But He was to be tried once more.

The streets of Jerusalem became dim and shadowy, and presently faded from His view. He was sitting, as He thought, upon a high mountain, and all around, turn which way He would, a magnificent picture met His view. The greatest cities in the world were there ; their streets crowded with caravans ; squares and gardens, full of the most stately trees and brilliant flowers. Temples of marble towered up toward the sky, fountains were playing, birds of every colour were singing joyfully. Here there came a train of camels, laden

with the most precious gifts ; there through the gates marched a splendid army, their banners blazing in the sunshine, their leaders on horses covered with golden trappings. Music was heard everywhere, the shops were full of beautiful things, crowds of people were passing through the broad handsome streets, and chatting to each other as they met. Through the gateway of a palace built of marble of all colours, could be seen a magnificent hall painted in gold and crimson and blue, where, on a throne of ivory studded with rubies, sat a king in his robes of state ; round him stood great men and nobles, they brought him whatever he asked for, did for him whatever he ordered.

Jesus sat there, all this grandeur before Him, and this thought came up. " You are called King of kings ; now you may be so if you like. All these things, the kingdoms of the earth and the glory of them, shall be yours if you will only sin *this once !*"

What would you have said ?

It was a lie, mark you, to begin with.

There could be no power apart from God ; all these things were His to give and His only. It was God's world, not the devil's, and Jesus faced him in such an outburst of anger as he well deserved. " Worship you ! You, the open enemy of my Father ! You, who have done your best to make this glorious world of His dark as night,

and foul with every sin ! You, a liar, who have told falsehood after falsehood about my Father to His children ! Away with you ! Get you hence, Satan ! Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Thoughts of sin vanished before such a torrent of holy anger ; Jesus was left alone. Every un-holy inclination vanquished, every evil spirit that had tempted Him, conquered. But the struggle had been a terrible one ; He *had suffered*, being tempted.

CHAPTER X.

THE BATTLE THAT CHILDREN FIGHT.

ALWAYS remember that Jesus suffered, suffered ten thousand times more than you can have any idea of. He so loved His Father, and so hated everything that was unholy, impure, and false, that any thought of evil was horrible to Him, gave Him actual and terrible pain. Every such thought was an insult to His Father, spreading sin and wretchedness in the hearts of men, doing all possible to keep them from coming back to God, and to the loving arms of Jesus, that their sins might be forgiven.

What would you say if you saw some one ill-treating your parents, insulting them, telling lies about them, calling them by terrible names, trampling and spitting on them? And what, if that some one were to come and ask you to do as he was doing, to join him in thus treating those that you love so much? Would you not be horrified, and shudder? Would you not turn from him

as a foul and loathsome thing? Would you not struggle with him with all your strength, no matter how much he hurt you?

Jesus *was fearfully hurt*, and it is because He suffered so much when tempted, that He feels as He does for you when you are tempted to do what is wrong. You will be tried just as Jesus was; in one way when you are little, in other ways when you grow to be men and women. You will be tempted to be greedy, care more for, and think more about, nice things, than about work, your reading, or even your play.

When such thoughts come, answer them as Jesus did. Say, "I have something to do besides eating and drinking. I have to do the work that God has given me. I am to eat and drink only as much as is good for me, that I may be strong and fight for God."

Sometimes the evil thought will be, "Oh, you are sure to be taken care of, if you are God's little child, so it does not matter what foolish things you do; don't be afraid, go with those boys who laugh at God, and who do not believe in Jesus. Show them that you can play with them; join in all that they do, and be none the worse for it."

Say to yourself as Jesus did, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Don't do what you know your Father would not like you to do. He has promised to keep you safe from sin, if only

you will go in the way that He chooses for you. If you wilfully stray from that path, if you make your constant friends and playmates of those who do not love God, it must be that He will let you see how weak you are without Him. When you are tempted, the power to resist sin will be wanting.

Another time, you may be tempted to say, "Oh, if I had but everything in the world!" The wicked thought will come, that you might have this pretty thing or the other, if only you will do something wrong, in order to get it. Tell a lie, perhaps; do something that you have been told not to do; go somewhere where you have been told not to go.

Telling lies and being disobedient is worshiping the devil? It is doing what a false, hateful spirit bids you do, instead of what God would have you do. It is as much as if you said, "I will have no more of my loving and tender father. I will say my prayers, I will give my heart, to this dark and cruel spirit!"

Oh, if ever you are tried like that, then is the time of all others to be angry. Do as Jesus did when on the mountain-top. Bid the hateful thought begone, for that you worship only your Father in heaven; that you will have no devil for your master.

Often and often through your lifetime, evil thoughts will try you as they tried Jesus—"If

Thou be the Son of God." Jesus would not even notice them. Be like Him, and don't trouble yourself with them. You know you are one of God's dear children ; did not baptism assure you of it ?

Not a son of God ? Why, who is it that has taken care of you all this time, since you were a baby ? Who gives you your daily bread, who hears your little prayer to Him as "our Father" ? Who makes you strong and well and happy ? Who is it that will punish you if you do wrong ? Whose spirit is it, that whispers in your heart when you are tempted to sin, "Don't !"

Ah, you cannot help being a child of God, when His Spirit is in your heart, trying to make you like your Father. So then, do not answer when taunted with this "if," but say to yourself, "*Because I am His son, God has sent His Spirit into my heart, teaching me to call Him Father.*"

Evil thoughts will be a terrible trouble to you, *but never be afraid of them*—no, not if a thousand of them were tempting you at once. You, like Jesus, can conquer them one and all. You are a son of God, you have the Spirit of God to help you. You have only to trust yourself entirely to God your Father ; only to pray Him, every day you live, to give you more of His own Spirit, that you may grow like Christ, and no wicked thought, no evil spirit, can ever master you.

You will be beaten sometimes; too often you will give in to sin, because you are still so unlike Jesus. You are fond of your own way, you even take a pleasure in being naughty now and again, but you will be sad and sorry afterwards. Do not be disheartened, though you may be—ought to be—sad when you have done wrong. Go at once to your Father God, and ask Him to forgive you for His own dear love's sake. Tell Him you will try and fight harder against bad tempers and passionate words. Take any punishment that He sees to be good for you, patiently and bravely, because you know you deserve it, and love Him even while He punishes.

When the temptations had been met and overcome, Jesus was utterly worn out with His struggle. His Father, God, did not leave Him, but sent to Him messengers of comfort, with an abundance of strength and peace.

God will do the same for you. Every time you conquer an inclination to do wrong, you will be the happier and brighter. You will get nearer, ever nearer, to your Father in heaven; and when you come to see His face, there will be such a smile of love upon it, as will more than repay you for the hard fight that you have had with sin.

It has been said of English soldiers, that "they never know when they are beaten," which means

that they will fight to the last, no matter how numerous be the enemy, nor how small the chance of success. I hope every boy when he grows up, will learn the duties and the discipline of a soldier, that, if need be, he may be able to join in the defence of England's rights and honour; but in the meantime, and indeed all your life long, you have a still greater battle than England's to fight. It is the battle for God, against the evil thoughts that tempt you, against the ignorance and misery and sin that there is in the world.

Let it be said of you, that you never know when you are beaten. Let the very failures that you make encourage you to fight again, because you will be the wiser for them, and because sure victory awaits those who will but struggle on.

You may be tempted sometimes to fear that the day is being lost, you may have suffered defeat, sin may seem too powerful to be driven backward. Believe it not! If you could but see across the battle-field, you would know that evil is giving way and being put to flight. Forward, then! the eye of your King is upon you. Each moment there comes some prophet's voice from a height above you, or some leader's voice from the front—"Onward! for the love of God!"—and the Christian host, with shouts of victory, press forward towards the holy land.

If you will learn the verses that follow, they may

help you to remember that there is a battle for you to fight, and victory and glory for you when it is over. I have called the verses

THE NEW CRUSADE.

We read how of old, the Crusaders
 A cross on their shoulder wore,
 A white mantle their armour covered,
 A cross was the sword they bore.
They fought, for the right of Christian men,
 At Christ's sepulchre to pray ;
We fight, for a Christ who has risen
 And gone into endless day.

On the heights that we have to carry,
 The enemy's posts are strong,
 But victory certain awaits us,
 The battle will not be long ;
 We follow a Captain, who never
 Has known what defeat may mean,
 We wear the white robe that He giveth,
 His sign on our breast is seen.

Every naughty temper we conquer,
 Each angry word we restrain,
 Makes the red cross to glow the brighter,
 As we tread the battle-plain.
 Every kindly act we remember
 For the love of Christ our Lord,
 Every selfish thought we surrender,
 Is a battle won for God.

We will turn from the grave of Jesus,
 Whose body lies there no more,
 And press on to God's home of glory,
 Where myriads of saints adore ;

Where the fountain of life unceasing,
Throws its rainbow-tinted spray ;
Where there's never a pain or parting,
And tears are all wiped away.

There, the white-robed angels are thronging
From out of the heavenly bowers,
To welcome and crown all the victors
With wreaths of undying flowers :
There Jesus, the Ever-triumphant,
Will each faithful soldier own,
As we pass o'er the golden pavement
To kneel at the sapphire Throne.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW KINGDOM.

SOME time after His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus left Nazareth, where He had dwelt since His childhood, and came to live in a town called Capernaum, on the shore of the lake of Galilee—a large inland piece of water, more like what we call a sea than a lake, passing sometimes by the names of the Sea of Gennesareth and the Sea of Tiberias.

Capernaum itself was not a very large place, but it was within a few miles of one of the most important cities of the Jews, Tiberias, and it was surrounded by many villages, among which were Bethsaida and Chorazin.

Along the side of the lake were many small towns and villages, the latter occupied mostly by fishermen, who (much as they are now) were a simple, hardy, and industrious set of people, toiling often day and night for their living. There were a great number of little ships kept along the coast for fishing and other purposes, and had you stood

any summer day upon the shore, the scene before you would have been busy and animated enough.

The country round was not beautiful, and the hills that rose up (some of them nearly from the water's edge) were dull and uninteresting—mere mountains of sand full of holes, fit only for the birds and foxes, who made their home there. To this town of Capernaum, it seems that the family of Jesus had moved, and it was here that He now commenced His public teaching.

He began just as the earlier prophets had done. "Repent! Be sorry for your sins, forsake them, cease to do evil, learn to do well," because "the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

A kingdom, you know, means the country and the people that are ruled by a king. So nowadays there is the kingdom of Sweden and of Italy. Each of these countries, and the people who live in them, form the kingdom of Sweden or Italy. In the same way, the Kingdom of Heaven was to include all the countries and all the people whose king was the King of heaven. Sin had been king in the world, and the end of its rule was darkness, wretchedness, and sin; now a new King, even Jesus, was coming to overthrow its cruel power, to free men from bondage, and to set up His own kingdom in the hearts of all.

In kingdoms of the world any one who desires it, may become *naturalized*: that means, that although

he may have been born in a place a long way off, he may, if he please, become a subject of any particular king; he may become so, by obeying certain laws which that king has made, and attending to certain rules which he has laid down. Having done that, he is made a member of the new kingdom, he has a right to claim protection from his sovereign, and is bound to fight for him if called upon by him to do so.

Jesus said to all men, Come and be "naturalized" in the kingdom of heaven: if you would be, you must obey God's first law, which is "Repent," give up your sin, then indeed you shall know that God is your God, and you are His own people.

Of the fishermen who lived along the lake of Galilee, many, no doubt, had heard about Jesus. One day as He was walking along the sea-shore, He saw two brothers named Simon and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea. He only said to them "Follow Me," and they left their nets and went with Him.

There must have been something very gentle and winning in His manner, to attract two rough, weather-beaten men like these; but no doubt they were led in a great measure by curiosity; they had heard their friends tell of the new teacher, and they were eager to know what He had to say.

A little farther on there was a ship lying, in which the fishermen were mending their nets. This

ship belonged to a man named Zebedee, whose sons, James and John, were working with him. These two also Jesus called, and they left their father with the sailors, and followed with Simon and Andrew.

They must have gone home with Jesus, listened to His teaching, and accepted Him as the promised Deliverer for whom their country was waiting, for almost immediately, we find Jesus and these four friends going round into the towns and villages, preaching the good news of God, and telling how He had at length given to His people a Saviour and a King.

Jesus said very much what the old prophets had proclaimed, but said it in quite a different way. They had come to men as God's servants, but He spoke to them as *the Son of God*, and as a King who had a right to command.

This was what astonished the people so much. They had been accustomed to hear the law of Moses read in the synagogue on their sabbath-day. They looked upon Moses as their great teacher and master, but Jesus came telling them to give up many things that Moses had commanded. He spoke as if He were far above Moses, as if He were giving them new laws, which were to take the place of those they had received from their fathers. It had of old been said, "Thou shalt love thy friend, and hate thine enemy." Jesus said,

“ Hate no one ; love ye your enemies ; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.”

The great people among the Jews, the Pharisees as they were called, thought that because they attended very carefully to all the observances of the law, they would ensure God’s favour. This new teacher said they were only deceiving themselves ; that His followers must do something very different, if they would enter His kingdom. The so-called religious people among the Jews, were fond of repeating their prayers in places where they could be seen by every one ; but Jesus bid His friends, when they prayed, go into their own room, that no eye but their Father’s in heaven might see them.

The people that Jesus blamed so much, would do anything in the world to make others say how religious they were. If they gave money to the Temple or to the poor, their first thought was, “ How shall we let the people know about it ? ” They had not the means that people use nowadays ; there were no newspapers in which their names could appear, as giving so much to build a new church or chapel, or to feed the poor ; so they used to send their money in bags to the priest with a man blowing a trumpet, in order that every one might say, “ Who is that sending money to the poor ? What a quantity he gives away ! ”

The Jews had been accustomed to keep fasts as well as feasts; that is, they not only rejoiced and praised God, but they expressed sorrow for having offended Him. Their duty toward God was taught them by pictures. When they rejoiced they were to dress in their best, to eat better food. When they were mourning, on the other hand, they put on a plainer dress, or disarranged or neglected the one they wore, and went without food for a time. The scribes and Pharisees used to take pains that people might know they fasted very often, and think how much they served God. They were careful to show themselves frequently in the streets with slovenly dress and disfigured faces, so that others passing might say, "How religious those people are!" And because they made this great show of religion, they thought it was for them to look down on others. People who were not seen regularly in the Temple or the synagogue they would hardly speak to; those who were not known to give money to the priests or to make long prayers, they would actually say were cursed!

All this was hateful to Jesus, and He spoke of it in bitter, withering words. Everything that was false, deceitful, hypocritical, aroused His anger at once. He used plain words to these "religious people," these false teachers of their countrymen—words that no one could have dared to use, but the

One who had come to discover all the secrets of men's hearts.

While they outwardly obeyed God's laws, Jesus knew that their hearts were full of evil spirits. The spirits of pride, selfishness, cruelty, were all there, teaching them to look down upon others as not so good as themselves; to seek to be great and rich and powerful; to neglect their duty of being loving, kind, and tender to the poor about them.

Where was there room in their hearts for the Spirit of God?

How could they, who said they had done nothing that was wrong, that they had fulfilled every commandment of God's law, become naturalized in the kingdom of heaven, of which the first law was, "Repent!" Jesus came to show them their Father God, and they turned from Him haughtily, saying, "Abraham is our Father." Jesus told them that He was the Son of God, who would free them from the slavery of their sins. They answered, "We were never in bondage to any man." "Thou hast a devil, and art mad!"

You see there was all the difference in the world between these Jewish teachers and Jesus, and I want you clearly to understand what it was.

They thought a great deal of their picture-book the law of Moses, but they had altogether forgotten what the pictures in it meant. They washed their hands, and imagined they had pleased God: it never

struck them that washing was to remind them how impure and unholy their hearts were. They fasted, and made themselves look ridiculous, and fancied that God would reward them for doing so. Instead of humbling themselves before God, confessing and forsaking their sins, they positively went about thanking Him that they were without sin ! Their one wish was to appear religious to other people, and how they managed this has already been shown. You will see, I think, that such conduct was not only wicked, but very absurd.

Just as if God had been one of themselves, as if they could succeed in deceiving Him, as they did their neighbours and friends ! Every thought of their heart was known to Him ; He knew perfectly that it was not for the love of Him that they gave money to the poor, that they went so often to church, and repeated so many long prayers that they never thought about—did not half understand. That was not what He wanted. He longed for them to know Him and love Him, to give Him their heart, to receive the Spirit which He had sent to them by His Son.

Jesus came not to tell them to do this or that, but to give them His own Spirit, even the Spirit of the Son.

When they let that Spirit come into their hearts and take possession of it, they would delight to do their Father's will as loving, obedient children.

They would not pray to God because they were ordered to do so, but because they could not help talking to one of whom they were so fond. They would not give money to the poor that God might reward them, but because all they had was God's, and lent them that they might do good with it. And when they had no money, they would give—what is sometimes much more wanted—a kind look, a gentle word.

Jesus came to bring all men into His kingdom ; as members of it they were to obey His laws and take Him in everything for their example ; they were to look on all as their brethren, because fellow-subjects of the same King, citizens of the same country.

CHAPTER XII.

JESUS TEACHING.

JESUS did not give His disciples a book full of written laws, to study and obey. *He bid them copy Him*; to do so, was their religion, it was what would bind them for ever to their Father God. No need any longer for the great picture-book of ceremonies which had been given to the Jews. There was but one simple rule in the kingdom of Jesus, "Do as I have done."

Jesus did a great deal more than talk to the people. "He went about doing good." By the might of God's Spirit He healed the sick, made the lame to walk, and the blind to see. He never thought of Himself; His only aim was to make people better and happier.

It was the same in little things as in great; whether He was at a wedding feast or restoring to a poor broken-hearted woman her only son. Wherever He came, it was as if sunshine had found its way into a cold, darkened room. There was

no noise, no roughness about Him. He was gentle, peaceful, and quiet. At the sound of His footsteps, hearts that were bursting with sorrow became happy, eyes that were blinded with tears, looked for Him in adoring love.

You remember the poor blind men that He passed by the wayside. Their life had been dark and sad, but Jesus was coming, and they believed that He had the power to restore sight to them. They cried aloud to Him and He asked, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" They longed to see, longed to know, their Deliverer and King. Jesus touched their eyes, and a new world was open to them ;—the sky and grass, the birds and flowers, the crowds of people standing round. But above all these things, they saw the loving face of their Saviour, and they joyfully followed Him along the way.

Think again of the disciples in the storm on the lake of Galilee, the night as black as could be, nothing to be seen but the white crested waves dashing against each other and threatening every moment to upset the ship. They had given up all for lost ; their wives and little children were in their thoughts ; it was very bitter to be drowned so near home. Listen ! What are those words that reach them, amid the dash of the sea and the roar of the storm ? "It is I, be not afraid !" Jesus had come to them walking on the sea, and the

moment He stepped into the ship there was a great calm !

Watch that funeral procession coming out of the city gate. The coffin is followed by a poor woman, sobbing as if her heart would break. The boy carried to his grave was her only son, and she herself was a widow. Her husband gone, this boy had been the light of her house, the joy of her heart. Now he, too, was taken, and it was more than she could bear. Jesus stopped her, and before she could tell whether or not she was dreaming, He had roused her boy from his slumber and laid him in his mother's arms.

Jesus not only made men happy by proving that God had given Him such power over their bodies as no one in this world ever had or ever again can have ; but He also showed that He was master of their spirits. Men, that had lost all restraint over themselves, were brought to the feet of Jesus, and with one word of His became quiet and gentle.

And not only did He cast the evil out of men, but He forgave them their sins. As people listened to Him, God's Spirit within woke their hearts from their long dream, and they threw themselves at Jesus' feet, confessing all, and praying Him to have mercy on them. He never sent one such away. He bid each one " Go in peace ; thy faith hath saved thee." As if He had said,

“ You have come to Me as the promised Saviour, you own Me as your King, you acknowledge Me to be the Son of God, able to rescue you from sin, able to rule and govern you, showing to you God your Father. I am on earth for this very purpose, to tell you that our Father will forgive all, that He has made Me your King, that I may give you strength to conquer every temptation, every evil thought that would lead you away from God. I will save you from yourselves, and from the power of sin—save you now and for ever. Go in peace.”

Was that not enough to send people away peaceful and joyful? Was it any wonder that “ the common people heard Him gladly ? ” Far and wide was spread the story of His gentleness and power. Crowds flocked from all parts to see Him, and to learn of Him.

Jesus did not preach to them much in churches or chapels, for the priests and religious teachers did everything in their power to oppose Him. He spoke to the multitude just wherever there was opportunity ; sometimes from a ship lying a very little way from the shore ; often in the fields, outside the town, away from all noise and bustle. He loved the country. He could breathe the fresh air, and look up through the clear blue sky to the home of His Father.

There were many things, too, in the country that Jesus was fond of talking about. A little bird flew

past, and He reminded those around Him of God's love and tenderness. Not one of those birds died, He said, but His Father knew of it ; and if He could thus take care of every sparrow, would He ever forget His own dear children ? He would point to a mass of golden lilies, that grew plentifully in the fields of Galilee, and ask men to learn a lesson from them. There they were, blooming by God's help, more gorgeous, more magnificent than even Solomon upon his throne. If God dressed the flowers in such lovely colours, was it for His children to be always fidgeting about what clothes they should put on ? "The fowls of the air," too, said Jesus—"look at them ; they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feedeth them ! Will He not also take care of you ?" To be always thinking about what you will have to eat, or what clothes you will wear, is not like children who feel sure of their Father's love. Try and do all that He gives you to do ; please Him by always doing what is right, and never doubt for a moment but He will always send you what is good and best.

To His parents, Jesus was always loving and obedient when He was little ; for them, He was ever careful, ever thoughtful when He grew to be a man. His dear mother followed Him all His life through, and was with Him at His terrible death. When suffering fearful pain of body, when heart-broken, because the people He had come to save,

had despised, rejected, crucified Him, He could still think of her He loved so much, and who would care for her when He had gone.

Jesus, because He had exactly the same spirit as His Father, was never cross or ill-tempered. No matter how tried He was, how weak and suffering, He was always ready to listen to every one's troubles, always anxious to relieve them. He could be terribly angry with people who pretended to be religious, and only mocked and insulted His Father ; but to those who had done wrong and told Him how sorry they were, no matter how great the wrong, how fearful the sin, He was sweetness and gentleness itself.

He did not wait for them to do some hard thing, or to keep on asking His forgiveness. They had only to be really sorry, really in trouble, and He found them out. "Come to me," He said, "all of you who are weary, all of you whose hearts are pressed down by the weight of your sins, all who are unhappy, all who are trying to forsake sin and find it hard, hard work ; I will refresh you, I will give you rest."

Such was the life that Jesus led while upon earth. Such is the example given you to copy.

CHAPTER XIII.

TALKING WITH OUR FATHER.

IF you love our dear Father in heaven, you will like to talk to Him often: not only in the morning or evening, but at any time. Between your games, when you feel what a grand and joyous thing it is to be strong and well, when you are walking or travelling, and you see all the wondrous beauty that God has given us in the world, can you help whispering a word of love and thankfulness to Him?

Jesus, you know, told us that His Father loved little children. So never be afraid of going to God: the oftener you talk to Him, the happier it makes Him, the holier, the happier it will make you. Do not fancy that fine language is necessary in your prayers. God listens with as much pleasure to your simple words, as to the grandest songs of praise that archangels sing before His throne.

Remember that our Father does not need us to tell Him what we want; He knows before ever we

ask Him. It would be a terrible thing, if He were to give us all that we beg of Him, for we do not know in the least what is good for us, and we often ask for something that would do us a fearful injury. I have known little children ask their parents or nurse for blazing wood, which had it been given them, would of course have set them on fire, and caused them most awful suffering.

We cannot tell what is best for us, but God knows exactly, and all that is good He has promised we shall have.

What would you think of children who, the moment their father came into the room, were to run to him crying, "Please give me this: do let me have that?" But if our prayers are nothing but a begging for one nice thing and another, we are just as selfish as the children I speak of.

Our prayers should be so much loving, reverent talk with our Father in heaven.

What do you say to the parents on earth that you love so much? You climb on your father's knee, you put your arms round your mother's neck; whisper to them how you love them; call them dear, and kind, and good. You tell them what you have been doing to-day, what you hope to do, where you expect to go, to-morrow. Will they go with you? And if they say "yes," what was happy before is made ten times happier! Why not go to God your Father like that?

In the morning and evening you will have a regular time and place in which to say your prayers. Kneel down, because kneeling is one of the lessons in God's picture-book. Jesus knelt when He prayed, and let your doing so remind you how great and glorious is His Father and ours. While you kneel at His footstool on earth, countless hosts in heaven bend low before His throne and angels cover their faces, as they think of His beauty, and goodness, and love.

Here are some little verses that may serve you sometimes for a prayer in the morning. You will find them very easy to remember.

Father, dearest Father !
Now the sun has come,
Bringing light and glory,
From Thy heavenly home.

We, Thy little children,
To Thy throne above,
We would hymn Thy praises,
We would sing Thy love.

Thou art wise and loving,
Thou art great and strong,
Glad when we do rightly,
Grieved when we do wrong.

Hear us, holy Father,
As to Thee we pray,
Asking Thee to keep us
Safe from harm to-day.

As our Saviour Jesus
When a little child,
Gentle was, and holy,
Pure, and meek, and mild,

He shall be our copy,
We will try to be
Patient and obedient,
Loving, kind as He.

Father God, our Father !
Guide us every hour,
Keep us safe and shield us,
From temptation's power.

So, when night returneth,
Holier may we be,
Kept from sin and sorrow,
All the nearer Thee !

At night you will surely have a great deal to tell God !

There will be things that you have done wrong and which you will ask Him to forgive. You will say how kind He has been to you, how happy He has made you. Say "Thank you" to Him, for keeping you well and strong, for giving you kind parents, brothers and sisters, friends and relations ; for sending His own dear Son Jesus, to be your Saviour and King ; for letting His Holy Spirit dwell in your heart and drive away all the evil that would come near it. Tell your Father that since He has promised to help you, you mean to

be the brave little soldier of Jesus : that you will fight against all your naughty tempers and wrong inclinations, and take Jesus as your copy and example in all things. Ask God to do with you, and all that you love on earth, just whatever He thinks best ; only to keep His arms close round you for ever, and to bring you safely home to heaven.

Would you like another little prayer, to put away in your memory, among others that you say at night ?

Most loving Father, whose dear Son Jesus called to Him the little children and blessed them, bless me, even me also, O my Father.

Forgive me what I have done wrong to-day, for Thy dear love's sake.

Thou, God, seest me ! make me true and pure in heart, that I may see Thee !

Make me loving, gentle, and obedient, that I may be like Jesus Christ.

Thanks for all Thy goodness to me ! for giving me all I have ; for making me well and happy ; and for sending Jesus to tell me of Thy love.

Keep me within Thine arms for ever, that when I die I may see Thy beautiful face, and praise Thee in heaven always, with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who canst do all things, take care of all I love, and help them to love Thee, and bring us all at last to heaven, the wonderful land, to praise Thee for ever with Jesus our dear Lord and Saviour. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE GARDEN.

Is it not wonderful that any one who led such a life as Jesus did, who was ever doing good and kind things to others, should have been ill-treated by the very people to whom He was so loving ? One can hardly believe that He should have been actually hated ! Even animals will love and be obedient to those who are kind to them ; yet Jesus came to His own, and His own received Him not. He lived among them, loving, teaching, and blessing them, and in three short years those for whom He had lived, were willing to see Him die a painful death. It happened in this way.

You remember what hypocrites the priests and great men of the Jews were, pretending to be good and religious while they were not ; managing to make the poor people, and those who did not know so much as they did, look up to and obey them. They taught their countrymen lies, and all the time despised them, for knowing no better

than to believe the lies. It was with these priests and great men, that Jesus was so angry; and it was they who hated Him, and did all in their power to prevent the people listening to Him. They went so far as to say that if any one acknowledged Jesus as the promised one of God, he should never be allowed to come into their churches !

The Jewish teachers had declared, that God only cared for the Jews among all the nations in the world, and of them, He only loved the few who knew every word of the law of Moses, and carefully attended to each little ceremony. Jesus told them, that their Father God loved all alike, men in every country, of every colour. The Rabbis said, that men could only properly worship God in the Temple at Jerusalem. Jesus assured them that this great Temple would be utterly destroyed; that there was no need to go there to pray, for that men's hearts were the temple of God, because His Spirit was in them; so that it mattered not where a man was, in a room by himself, out in the fields, away on the sea, God was with him, and would listen to him. The priests made the people believe, that they could not themselves come near to God, that they must bring presents, and that they, the priests, would pray for them. *Jesus proclaimed a new order of priesthood*; He said, the one present a man had to make to God was his

heart, and *that in His kingdom all were priests* ; each could offer all his heart's best love to God ; each could speak to Him whenever he willed, as a man talketh with his friend.

So the great men and the learned, the rich men and the priests, hated Jesus, because He denounced them to the people as hypocrites. They were jealous, when they heard of and saw the wonderful things He did, and their constant desire was to destroy Him.

After many failures, they at last found an opportunity. A feast, the great one of the year, the feast of the Passover, was to be held in Jerusalem. The city was always crowded at this time, and it was an easy thing to raise a disturbance. Jesus, with His friends, came up to the feast. A young ass was found for Him, and He rode into Jerusalem. The crowd heard that He was coming, and went out to meet Him. They gave Him such a welcome ! They pulled down branches of palm-trees, spread them in His way, and they thronged before Him and behind, shouting, "Hosannah ! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord ! "

A strange procession, was it not, for a King ? No soldiers, no grand music, no great men, but a crowd of poor people and children singing ! Here was the opportunity for the Pharisees to make mischief. This man they hated was attracting the

attention of the whole city, and accepting homage as a king! Now, they thought, we can accuse Him before the Roman governor; now we can get Him punished for making a disturbance and claiming to be a king, here, where the Romans are masters. They hated the Romans, but they hated Jesus ten times more.

The Passover was a supper that was eaten every year. It was another picture of the Jews. It was to remind them of the night in which God saved them from death, when He sent that terrible punishment on the Egyptians—the loss of their eldest children.

Supper had been prepared for Jesus and His friends, in a large upper room which had been hired for the evening. Here all had gathered—the twelve disciples who had followed Jesus in His ministry, and who said they loved Him, best of all men. Their Master was more than ever gentle and loving that night. He foresaw the trouble that was coming. He knew that one of these great friends at the table only pretended to love Him, and was thinking how he could best sell his Lord. He knew that in this very week, there was shame and agony and death before Him. He was sad, and no wonder. But He kept His sorrow to Himself as long as He could. He tried to cheer those He loved. He had told them before, that He must soon leave them, but they were be-

wildered ; they seem still to have fancied that He really meant to make Himself a great earthly king, and that they would have places of power under Him. They would not believe what was going to happen, though He had told them of it.

Jesus had never been so tender, as He was that evening. While they were lying round the supper-table, He took the bread they were eating and blessed it ; and He took the wine-cup from which they were drinking, and gave thanks to God, His Father, and then told His friends, that this bread and wine were for them who loved Him, His body and His blood. If they, when He had gone from them, would take it always in remembrance of Him, they would know how near He was to them, and they to Him.

Jesus, like Moses, taught a great deal by pictures, or parables as they were called, and throughout all His picture-book, there is nothing more simple or beautiful, than this one of the bread and wine. Do not forget that it is *a picture*.

What we eat, you know, becomes part of ourselves ; our meat and drink makes our bones, and brain, and blood ; so if we take bread and wine, which Jesus says is His body and blood, we must have Him for our very own. He must become part of us. And this is really the case. Just as you saw that Jesus was most truly one with His Father, *because the same spirit was in both*, so we may

become one with Jesus, having His pure and loving Spirit in our hearts.

When supper was over, Jesus and His friends sang a hymn, and then went out in the cool of the evening, to a garden where they often walked. By this time the Master had grown very, very sorrowful. He was sure that Judas, one of those twelve friends who had been always with Him, was at that moment plotting with the priests, how he might deliver Jesus to them. They did not dare to lay hands on Him in the daytime, for fear of the people rescuing Him. So it was planned, that Judas should lead a band of soldiers in the dusk of the evening to the garden, and take Him prisoner.

Jesus was listening every moment for the tramp of their feet, and His heart sank within Him ; He bid His disciples sit down a while, while He went on a little way to pray. He knelt there on the ground alone, not one friend at His side to whisper a word of comfort. Tears were in His eyes, His very heart was breaking. The thought of all the shame and suffering He had yet to endure was bad enough, but that was nothing, to the sorrow that He felt for the very men, who were going to inflict suffering upon Him. He had come to save them, and they would not be saved. They would not come back to their Father ! How very few people had believed Him after all. He had loved all

men, but they were hating or deserting Him, and now He was to die, and it seemed as if His life on earth were only to be like a lightning flash, making the scene brilliant for an instant, and leaving it darker than before.

See if the heart of Jesus is not indeed breaking. What is it He is saying? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" "If it may be, that I may be spared all this dreadful agony; if it may be, that you, my dear Father, may be spared the insults which are going to be offered to you in my person; if it may be, that these poor sinful children may be spared the sin of crucifying Me, and putting Me to open shame, my Father, so let it be."

We can never understand the awful struggle that Jesus was having with Himself at this hour. Remember, that as a man He had all the sensitiveness, all the shrinking from pain that you have; that as Son of God, it only needed one prayer to His Father to have put Him where no shame or suffering could come near Him.

But His will was, even in this fiercest hour of trial, one with His Father's. It was not for Himself, but for others He had lived, and for them He was ready to die, if by dying He could win back their love to God. But their hatred to His Father was a thing simply dreadful to Jesus; and that they should hate Him and want to kill Him, for no other

reason than that He had told them the truth, proved them so completely the slaves of evil, that for an instant He might almost have despaired of rescuing them. That would have been the most awfully bitter thought that could have passed through His mind. That was indeed enough, to make His sweat fall like great drops of blood to the ground.

But that feeling of despair, that shrinking from shame, were gone in a moment—for listen! He goes on praying, “Nevertheless, Father, not my will, but Thine be done!” He willingly accepted whatever might come—insult and bodily pain; He was willing to be mocked and scourged and crucified; was ready to be cursed and spat upon by the very men He was dying to save—ready, in short, to do anything and suffer anything, if only by so doing, He might give glory to His Father and lead His long-lost children home.

CHAPTER XV.

THROUGH DEATH TO VICTORY.

THINK very often about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, because all of us have, at one time or another, to be in that garden ourselves. I mean, that a time will come to each of us, when, in some great matter, there will be a desperate struggle in our hearts. We may wish to do God's will, but it will be so very, very hard, that we shall shrink from it. Friends, at such a time (if ever it come to you), will not be able to help you much, and it will be for you then, as always, to follow the example of Jesus. Go alone to God, use the very words that Jesus used, and beg your Father to help you to conquer self-will, and to pray the little prayer of Christ heartily.

And if you wish, when such a great trial comes, to be like Jesus, do your best every day to be like Him in little things. You may always find ways of being so, of giving up your will, and doing what God would have you do. Some friends give you

money. Selfishness says, "spend it on yourself." God's voice answers, "think of others before yourself, as Jesus did. Is there no one who is sick or sad that your money would make more happy?" Whisper to God, "Not my will, but Thine be done," and you will be learning to be like Christ in the garden. You are sitting down to something that interests you very much : a new picture-book, or your drawing, something that you would be very sorry to leave, when just at that moment, a person in the room asks for a thing that you know is at the top of the house, in the garden, or the village.

Do you see how you may be like Jesus in Gethsemane? Your own pleasure is to sit still, and enjoy yourself. God would have you kind and thoughtful for others. Jump up and run for what is wanted, and think of Jesus on your way, and at night, when you go to bed, you will be more like Him than when you got up in the morning. You will have done just what He would have done.

Do you wonder that so little a child as you can be like Him? How is it when you are with children older than yourself? You notice what they do, how they behave, what they say, because you fancy they know more than you, and you wish to be like them. You can almost always tell who are brothers and sisters, who have been brought up in the same family. There is not only a likeness

in their faces, but they have the same tone of voice, the same ways and manners. So you, if you are much with Jesus, will become like Him. He gives you His Spirit to help you to be so ; and if you think a great deal of Him, learn what He did, and try to do the same, you cannot help growing more and more like Him.

But mind you never make a fuss about it. Don't be telling people, that you do this thing or the other, because you mean to be like Jesus ; keep it a little secret between God and yourself, and the time will come, when for what you have done secretly, your Father will reward you openly. You will find that you are indeed like Jesus, not in His sorrow and pain, but in the glory which God has given to Him in the world of everlasting sunshine.

You know what happened when Jesus had done praying. He woke His friends, telling them that it was time to be going : but as He did so, there came the band of men who had been sent to take Him, and Judas, His false, deceitful friend, drew to His side and kissed Him, so that the soldiers in the darkness might know whom they were to seize.

The history of the next two days is a dreadful one for all who love Jesus. Hurried before Herod and Pontius Pilate, struck and jeered at, left by a cowardly judge to the tender mercies of the priests, who persuaded the crowd to shriek out "Crucify Him ! crucify Him !" bound and scourged, de-

serted by the friends who had sworn most to love Him, never to leave Him, made to bear His own cross till He sunk fainting on the ground !

Need I remind you of the awful scene on Mount Calvary ? The cross raised with the dear Saviour upon it, the nails tearing His hands and feet, two common thieves crucified one on either side of Him, cursing and reviling Him, a brutal crowd watching His sufferings, more brutal soldiers casting lots for His clothes ! And worse still, tempted in this hour of bitter pain, as He had been tempted in the desert, years before. "*If He be the Son of God,*" jeered the crowd, "*let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him !*" Think what divine strength must have been needed, to struggle against such a temptation as that ! One word, and an angel host would have released Him, and destroyed the cowards that thronged around His cross ! But you remember what He had said before. "*The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them ;*" and so, dying that He might save, with a patience that only the Spirit of God could give Him, He suffered on to the end.

The worst had not come even yet. The bitterest thought of all dared Him the last, "*If you the Son have thus to suffer, can your Father love you, has He not left you 'alone ?'*" That thought wrung from the heart of Jesus, the saddest words

He ever uttered, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But the thought, was but like a moment's shadow over the brightness of the sun. He was to die a conqueror; and with a great cry, "Father! into Thy hands I commend my spirit," Jesus, the Son of God, gave up His soul into His Father's keeping.

For two days, it seemed as if all were lost; the body of Jesus lay in the new grave which Joseph had prepared for it. His friends shut themselves up in their house, lest the priests should punish them for having followed the Prophet of Galilee. They were like men in a dream; not a week before, they had walked in that triumphal procession which conducted Christ into Jerusalem; they had thought the time was come, when He would take to Himself His great power, and reign.

And now—He had been killed and buried! All their bright hopes had faded. They would never again hear His kind and loving voice, never see the look of love which had so often brought them back to Him, when tempted to go away; they were like an army whose leader had been made prisoner—all was despondency and confusion. At the very moment when Jesus had been going, as they thought, to prove Himself a conqueror, they had seen Him beaten by death, laid in the grave like other men. They had thought, that their Master was indeed He who would deliver Israel, but their

hopes were now cold and dead, like Him they remembered and wept for.

Then Jesus had said something about His rising again from the dead, but they had not understood Him ; they had yet to learn that to Him had been given the keys of the grave and death ; that as He by the power of God had raised others from the tomb, He by the same power should be raised Himself ; that He had submitted willingly to death, just as He had done to pain and suffering and humiliation, to show His brethren that there was nothing He would not go through for them, and to prove to them that He, by His victory over death, would ensure to all those who followed Him a like triumph.

But it was so. On a Sunday morning very early, while the dawn was breaking, the stone that stood over the grave where Jesus lay was rolled away, and He came forth as conqueror ; no more temptations or troubles were to vex His soul.

Of His free love He had borne every sorrow, every temptation that we can have to bear. He had humbled Himself even to death for us ; He, the Son of the Father, who might have been in the highest heaven, had lived a life of poverty and grief among men, that He might show them how to live. He had died, to give them this last greatest proof of His Father's love—died and passed through the grave, that they too, being one

with Him by the Spirit which He would give them, might rise from their graves in beauty and strength.

No sooner had Jesus arisen, than His first thought was, to comfort His sorrowing friends. A poor woman, to whom He had forgiven many sins, and who loved Him dearly, came very early that Sunday, while it was even dark, to His grave. It was empty, and He was gone. Turning round, she saw Him standing close beside her, and mistook Him for the gardener. But the first sound of His voice, "Mary!" brought her to herself, and her heart could hardly contain itself, as she looked on His dear face again.

That evening, two of His disciples were walking to a little village called Emmaus, talking over all that had happened in the past week, and their hearts were sad. Jesus came along the way, and joining them, asked why it was so. When they told Him all, when they said with a sigh, "But we thought, that it had been He who should deliver Israel!" their Master made clear to them the writings of the old prophets, and showed, how the true Deliverer must be one who should save, not the Jews from the power of the Romans, but all the children of God, from the slavery of sin.

The old prophets, with unshaken trust in the goodness and righteousness of God, had boldly promised freedom to them that were bound. To all that were in darkness, they had sworn that

light should come ;—to those who were groaning under the tyranny of the oppressor, they had foretold the coming of a mighty Deliverer and King.

Not even the silence of the grave daunted them, for one among them had even declared, that God would never leave His soul in the grave, nor suffer His holy One to see corruption !

But while their faith was strong, the hopes of the prophets must have been often low. Disappointed in Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, in Hezekiah and Cyrus, they watched wearily on through the night, for the dawning of the day of righteousness, for the coming of the Saviour and the King.

The two disciples, as they walked along that country road, and the golden tints of sunset shaded into gloom, were blessed above prophets and kings, for they were seeing and hearing, what those who had lived before them, had only longed for.

For to these two travellers had come the Messias—the Christ—the One, in whom prophets' dreams were finding their fulfilment. Here was a King, yet one led as a lamb to the slaughter : a man of sorrows, yet a Prince and a Saviour ! Here was the first proof, that the poets' glorious hope of a life after death was no idle fancy, but a truth, that sprung out of the love and righteousness of God. His beloved ones were not to be left in the grave, nor to lose the beauty of that image in which He had created them.

The hearts of the two disciples burned within them as Jesus talked, so when they reached their house, they begged Him to come in and stay the night, for it was now late. While they were at supper, He took bread, and blessed it, and gave it to them. In one instant, the remembrance of that night before the death of their dear Master flashed upon them! It was He Himself! how could they have been so blind as not to know Him! He was gone, even while they asked themselves the question, but they rose up in haste and returned to Jerusalem, and told their brethren, how their Lord had walked with them, and how the moment that He brake the bread, they knew Him.

Even as they spoke, Jesus came into the room where all the disciples were gathered, and said to them, "Peace be unto you." They were terrified at first, for they could not believe that it was really He; but as He continued speaking to them, He showed them, in His feet and hands, the marks of the nails which had fastened Him to the cross, and they knew Him with rapture for their own loved Master, who had been dead and was alive again.

For a week or two He stayed with them, comforting and cheering them, bidding them go in His name into all the world, and tell to every creature the good news, that their Father in heaven had sent His Son to prove to them His love, to bring them back to Him, to conquer sin and death for

them, to make them free children of God, instead of slaves of sin, and to set up His kingdom upon earth—a kingdom of love and joy and peace. Then while they stood one day talking with Him on the hill-side, He was carried from them up into heaven, where one day we shall see Him, at our Father's right hand, on His throne of glory.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FRUITS OF VICTORY.

YOU have heard, I dare say, that earthly kings, when they have won a great victory, go in triumph back to their country, and enter the city in state. The flags that have been taken in battle, the guns that the enemy has left in his flight, are carried in long procession before the monarch, and the people of his kingdom talk a great deal about what has been won, by his hard fighting and brilliant victory.

I want, in this chapter, to talk to you a little of the great triumph of Jesus, and how much He has gained for us, His subjects, by this hard-won success of His.

The life and death of our Saviour and King, His rising from the grave and going up to heaven, are the most wonderful things that ever did, or ever can, happen upon earth. Great and good men die every day, and are mourned for, more or less, as what they have done is remembered. This one

made his country rich and powerful ; another, born in a land where he and his countrymen were slaves, gave them courage to fight against their oppressors, and free themselves from bondage ; a third, has written books that have made the world wiser and better.

But no one has ever done what Jesus did, nor will he at any time be able to do it. You can tell the names of some men, who have accomplished great things. Moses saved the Jews from the cruel slavery of Egypt. Samson and David destroyed the power of the Philistines, and made their nation first among others. Things such as these were great and noble, but after all, they were of use only to very few people in the world.

But Jesus won a great victory for *all men*, and has divided the fruits of His triumph with all. There is no one so great, but he can gain from Jesus infinitely more than he has already ; no one so poor, but he can be made ten thousand times richer than all the kings of the earth put together. *Jesus has done nothing less, than save everybody in the world—man, woman, and child.* Every one that ever lived, or that ever can live, has been saved by Him.

“ Saved from what ? ” do you ask ? If you think of the chapters you have already read, you will be able partly to answer your own question.

First, you know *He has saved us from the slavery*

of sin. You remember how men had forgotten the truth about God ; how sin had been ruler and king in men's hearts, and had made the world full of misery. It was to break the chain which had been fastened on us, that Jesus came.

If, by any means, the tempter could have but for once induced Christ to do his bidding—if in the desert Christ had yielded, and had made the stones bread—if in Gethsemane He could have been induced to say, “Let *my will*, not Thine, be done”—if on the cross He had given way, and had come down to prove His power, all would have been lost ! Evil would have proved itself stronger than the Spirit of God, and we, instead of being born into this world the children of God's dear love, and the heirs to a beautiful kingdom, might have been the miserable slaves of sin, lost in the darkness, with no hand stretched out to lead us to our Father's home.

But Jesus has not only made us free, He has given us power to keep so, given us strength to resist evil ourselves, and overcome it just as our Master did. It would not be fair for us to be better off than Jesus was. He was tried and tempted, and so must we be ; indeed, if we had no battles to fight, no enemies to conquer, we could never win the crown of victory. No triumphal entry, no grand procession, nor banners, nor music, are for those who stay at home while others are risking their all

against their country's enemies. So we must make up our minds to fight bravely, as our Lord did, against God's enemies and our own.

The tempter still does all possible, to draw men back into the bondage from which they have been freed: still tells them all kinds of lies, still does all that can be done, to lead them into sin. Men are still tempted, just as Jesus was; they are still offered anything, if they will only kneel down to sin instead of to God. There is still the taunt, "*If thou be the son of God;*" still the lying thought prompted, that God is angry, and that if His children go home to Him, He will only punish them. "*Jesus died for me!*" is the thought of some poor child of God, weary and sick of sin, and whom God is begging to come back to Him. "*He died for this person perhaps, or the other, but not for me.* True, He has saved a few people, but I am not one of them. I have been doing sin's bidding, I have taken sin for my king, I am a slave of evil, not the child of God."

Now, this temptation is so horrible, these lies are so frightful, that God only knows how they could have been invented. They have destroyed the happiness and lives of thousands of God's dear children, whom He was loving as only a Father could love. But for our knowledge that Jesus conquered evil for all, we too might have been induced to believe such lies as these; we might

have been always afraid that our liberty was only for a little time ; that sin would, one day, again get the better of us, and drag us down and down into the darkness till we had lost all sight of our Father's loving face.

Jesus has saved us from ourselves. You will often hear it said of a man, that he has no worse enemy than himself. That means, that though he may have many friends who are kind to him, though he has been taught what is right, has learnt that he should not do what is wrong, he is still always in trouble about something or other, continually getting himself into difficulties, grieving his friends, and going the way to make an enemy of everybody. He is for ever making up his mind to do a thing, and never doing it. At the time when it should be done, some new fancy gets into his head, and his mind is taken up with some fresh business or amusement.

We are all of us, more or less, like that man. It is of no use to blame evil spirits or the weakness of our nature for all we do that is wrong. Temptations only succeed, because we ourselves are willing to listen to them, and to let evil come and live in our hearts. We are lazy, or vain, or passionate, or greedy, and we are tempted with something that just suits these naughty tempers ; then we sin—not, remember, because we are obliged, but because we like to. We know very

well what is God's will, but we are too lazy, too careless to bestir ourselves. There is a chance of doing some little kindness to a friend, but it would give us some trouble, and so we put off doing it. We make up our minds to be very regular in everything, saying our prayers at the proper time, and so on ; but one night we have been up later than usual, we are tired, and so we hurry through them as fast as we can, hardly thinking of what we are saying.

Now, Jesus was tempted just exactly in the same way. He had the same weak body that we have. He was often very, very tired ; often, no doubt, would have been thankful for rest, but He never gave way : in every single case He conquered Himself, and did whatever God would have Him do.

If He, our king, conquered His own human weakness, you may also. It cannot be managed all at once. Little by little, day by day, try hard, for His dear sake, to overcome yourselves and your bad tempers ; and do this, not by routing out all the little secrets of your hearts ; not by turning your heart inside out, as it were, every night, to see how much there is that is evil in it—how much anger, jealousy, and impurity—but by thinking about God your Father, about Jesus your Saviour, and striving in everything to copy Him.

Jesus has saved us from all fear, from ever being afraid of our Father. Men had, you remember,

become afraid of God, because they believed that His only thought was how He might punish them, do them some injury ; but now we know for certain that He, our Father, is love itself. Jesus tells us, that God counts every hair of our head, and thinks only how He can make us happy. Children are sometimes cruelly frightened by those who should take care of them, but let them remember always that they are God's dear little ones, and that nothing can by any possibility hurt them. God watches over you day and night, He will never leave you to yourselves, or to the power of evil. Having begun a good work in you, He will finish it ; He will give you more and more of the Spirit of Jesus, if you will only ask for it, and at last He will bring you home to Himself.

Jesus has saved us from being afraid of evil spirits. Till His coming, men had lived in dread of these ; they had worshipped them, they had murdered their little children, that devils might be pleased with their sufferings, and so spare their parents ! But now, we know that devils have no power in the world ; neither in this life nor any other, can we ever be plucked out of our Father's hand.

Jesus has saved us from being afraid of death. Before He came, millions upon millions of people had died, old and young alike. Their friends saw them grow weaker and weaker, perhaps suffer great

pain, and then their eyes would close. They never spoke again, but lay cold and still. Their bodies would be laid in the ground, the grass grew over them, the flowers bloomed. Friends cried and went mourning. Families were divided ; children died and left their parents to miss their happy faces and merry laughter ; parents died, and the children were alone in the world, breaking their hearts for the loved ones they had lost.

It was not to be wondered at, if people had become afraid of death. Jesus proved that death was but like a moment's sleep, nothing more. From the grave He re-appeared in strength and glory; and because He did, we, for ever one with Him, must do so too. Death was but one step of the way to His Father's home : to Him it was a very painful one, because cruel men were tormenting Him, evil thoughts were tempting : but to many of God's children death comes without any pain at all ; they close their eyes for an instant, and the next they open them in a beautiful world where their dear Father smiles upon them, where Jesus is waiting to welcome them.

Fancy if some time when you were far away from home, you were carried back again in your sleep ; that when your eyes opened in the morning you saw your dear father and mother close to you ; your brothers and sisters surrounding you, falling on your neck and kissing you ; the old nurse, that was

loving and fond ever since you can remember ; the servants, who were so thoughtful for you when you were sick, so ready to romp and have fun with you when you were well,—all delighted to see you, telling of everything that had happened since you left, of all the new things that there were waiting for you—would it not be delightful ? That is only what death, the messenger of God, will do for you,—take you in his arms and carry you home. You cannot see that home now, because there is a curtain hung up between it and you, but death draws back the curtain, and as the light breaks in upon you, all the beauty of heaven will be seen.

If death comes when you are sick or in pain—well, never mind, remember that there can be no pain but your Father allows it. It is as medicine to you, you may be sure ;—not nice at the time, but will not you take it when your Father holds the glass ? Drink off the cup manfully and patiently, that you may be like Jesus. Never be afraid of death. Get accustomed to think about it, to talk of it, so that when it comes to you or any you love, it may not surprise or frighten you. Death is not a beautiful thing, I know, but it is the very last thing on earth that can bring you either trial or pain ; that over, you will be in your Father's home, a conqueror like Jesus your brother.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAVED!

Do you wonder *how* it was that Jesus by His life and death saved us as He did? Do you think to yourself, "I wonder how He did it?" Well, we cannot as yet understand all about it, and we never shall do till we come where He is, and are able to ask Him. But our Father likes us to try to understand it even now, and Jesus has told us a great deal which will help us to do so.

Think of what I was explaining to you in another chapter; how men had come to look upon God as a cruel and revengeful spirit; how they worshipped devils, and had become slaves to sin. You might have thought that God, whom they had so insulted, would have ceased to love them, that He would have been really angry, and said, "I will have nothing more to do with such wicked, ungrateful children." But that the dear God could not say, because He loves on, and loves for ever; no ingratitude, no unkindness from His children,

changes His heart. They are His own dear ones, and He must have them at home with Him.

How were they to be brought there?

He had sent teacher after teacher, He had given every day proofs of His love, in the summer sunshine and the winter snow ; flowers had breathed out His fragrance, fruits had proved the sweetness of His love ; and what had been the end of it ? The prophets had been killed, the fruits were offered as a sacrifice to idols, and the flowers had been woven into garlands to adorn the temples of devils.

Was God's patience not tired out ? Not even then. He said, "These foolish, sinful children will not believe what they are told about Me ; nothing that men can say, will make them less afraid of Me, or induce them to come home.

"They shall *see Me* for themselves ! not as they dream of me, a cruel King, but as their loving and merciful Father, waiting only to forgive their sin and to embrace them. They shall see Me in the one only Son of my love, who has never been away from Me, who is ever one with Me through my Spirit that is in Him.

"This Son who has never sinned, shall go to His brothers and sisters who are covered and stained with sin. He who is the light of my kingdom, shall become the light of the world. He shall live with His brethren, to show them

how sons of mine should live. He shall die for them, because His dying shall prove to them His love and Mine, in such a way that they cannot any longer doubt it. He shall draw all men to Him. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ Sin shall kill Him with pain and agony, that my children may at length see how hateful and loathsome a thing it is ; but I will not leave my beloved ones in the grave. Just as sin and Satan think that they have conquered, they shall find their power snatched from them for ever. My Son shall come forth from the grave, and ascending to my right hand, shall receive, as the reward of His loving obedience, the greatest gifts from men. Even their hearts shall be given unto Him for His kingdom, and those that have been my enemies, shall He bring to rest with Me.”

Great and glorious gifts has Jesus obtained for us, but the gift of gifts—that gift by which He saves us, is His own spirit—the spirit of love, which teaches us the truth about God our Father, which guides us back to His feet as penitent, loving children ; the spirit, which, if we cherish it in our hearts, will make us like Jesus Himself,—make us actually one with the Father, even as He is.

While Jesus brings to you this great gift, does it not make you happy to think, that you, little child as you are, may bring a gift to Him ? By offering

Him all your heart, and all your life, and all your love, you lay at His feet bright jewels that He will delight to place in His Father's crown.

Thus you become saved! He gives to you the spirit of a loving, obedient son of God, and you, through Him, offer to His Father and to yours, a heart, troubled often as it must be with temptations, clouded oftentimes as it will be by sin, but a heart, that the spirit of Jesus will purify day by day, till it shine clear and bright as a diamond of God.

Do you now understand a little, of the way in which Jesus has saved the world? The great prize which He gained, was the power to give to all men the spirit that was in Himself, the spirit that makes us sure the great God is our Father, and that leads us to Him. *All the sin in the world had begun from forgetfulness of a Father and from a dread and shrinking from Him as from something terrible.* Never forget this. Sin is doing your own will instead of your Father's; pleasing yourself in place of doing what you know He would have you do, and never in this world or in any other can you be saved from sin but through the spirit of childlike love and obedience, which is the Spirit of Jesus.

He, the Son, came and won men's love. In Him, because He was one with the Father, they saw the Father. As they watched Jesus, noticing

His loving, tender life, heard the words of welcome and forgiveness which He spoke to the sad and sorrowful and weary, they could not but be drawn to Him. And when He told them that He had come, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him—even His Father and theirs, could they hesitate any longer?—should they not come to One so great and loving and good?

But how? That was a question that had been asked in pain and weariness over and over again. How could men find out God? Jesus brought the answer—not in words, as the prophets had done, but in Himself. *HE was the answer.* As the poor lost children of God listened to His voice, they believed in Him as the true Son, they confessed to Him their sin, and heard the words of pardon, they caught His spirit, and grew more and more like Him, and through Him found their way back to that dear Father, with whom He was one, of whom He was the exact and perfect likeness.

You have seen what Jesus has saved you from, and how He saves you: let me tell you what He *does not* save you from, and that is, the punishment which follows sin. He did not live and die and go up to heaven, just that you might do wrong, and get off without being punished. If you sin you will suffer, depend upon it; you can no more put your hand into the fire without being burned, than you can break God's commandments and go un-

punished. How could it be? Your earthly father does not give or spare you correction for his own pleasure. It is, as I have told you already, to make you better, to help you to remember yourself the next time when you are tempted.

If indeed, God did not love you so dearly, so everlasting as He does, He would do, as some foolish parents do, spare His children punishment, for fear of giving them a little pain! But He cannot see you sinning, going away from Him, without doing all in His power to lead you back and to keep you ever at His side. When you really love your dear Father in heaven, you cannot feel angry with Him for punishing you: ask Him to give you strength to bear the pain bravely, and to look up into His face, though your eyes may be blinded with tears, and say, "Father, I can bear it from You."

Need I tell you that Jesus did not die to save you from a *harsh and revengeful God*? I think you must see yourself that that is a lie, but it is one that has been believed in, over and over again. Save men *from* God, indeed! You must feel what a monstrous falsehood that is! That the Father who has loved His children from the moment He created them, whose heart was sad and grieved because they had all wandered away from Him—who to bring them back again, did not spare even His own dear Son,—who has given them His

Spirit to dwell in their hearts, and whisper ever of His love,—that He should be harsh and ill-tempered with them ! Was there ever a lie so black, so dishonouring to Him ? Does He speak as if He were harsh or ill-tempered ? “ I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins ; return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee ! ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR FATHER'S HOME.

HOME! That is a word that all children love ; it means to them, comfort, happiness, and all kinds of little pleasures. But home does not seem home, unless it is our father's.

There are many little children who have a home, but it is not their father's. They are orphans, and have only strangers to take care of them. Sometimes the friends and relations of little children who are orphans, give them only the name of home. Other children are in the house, who *are* at home, and there is a difference between them and the others. In the home of your father, there is no difference made. He gives you, one and all, *a right* to be there. He does not treat you like slaves, just to do his bidding ; does not give you your clothes, stories, and pictures as a favour. All that you have he gives you, because he loves you so much, because it is his one wish, that you may be good and happy. When he rewards you, it is

to encourage you to do what is right; when he punishes, it is that you may not do wrong again.

So your father's home is to you the brightest spot in the world. He himself is there; your mother too, with the same winning smile that is as fresh and sunny when you see it the last thing at night, as when it shines in at your bedroom door in the morning. Brothers and sisters are at home; the old nurse who has been with you so long, and always tries to beg you off when you get into trouble; servants who have been kind to you, and are only friends under another name,—all these are in your father's home.

You can never really know what home is, until you have been away from it. Were you ever at school? When you go, you will understand what home means. Wait till the holidays are near; you will find yourself counting the days till you go home. Cutting a notch in a stick every day, and numbering it again and again, or making over your bed little pencil lines, that you may add up before you go to sleep, and say to yourself, "Only twenty-three days now!" As the days grow fewer, you can sometimes hardly think of anything but home, and the prizes you hope to win; and what a welcome awaits you at the door when you do arrive! Is it not worth all school days to be home again? Everything in your room is as you left it; the toys in their old places, the big boat on the shelf, the



"Is it not worth all school days to be home again?"

(p. 124.)



fishing-rod in the corner. How you want to see everything at once, but the dogs will hardly let you pay attention to anything. When you have had your run round the garden—over the green, round by the pond, where you fancy you can see that same little roach that you have so often missed catching—into the wood, just to look if the letters you cut on the beech-tree are all right, what a lot there is to be done in the house !

Evening comes, and more happiness awaits you ; there are new books to see, fresh games to learn. New joy is in store for the morning, for your father and mother have been planning little treats that will take you by surprise one after another. Night comes, and you join in the hymn, whose words you remember so well, “Lead us, O Christ, when all is gone, safe home at last !” “Our Father” has been said, and then there is such an embrace from your father, such a kiss and look from your mother, such laughing and fun all round. I think that that night, when you are tucked up in your little bed, you will say to yourself, “There is no place in the world like home !”

What that happy home is to you—ay, and ten thousand times more—our Father’s home in heaven, will be to us all when we come there. In this world we are at school ; every one has his work to do, his lessons to learn. God sets them us, and some of them are easier, some more difficult. All

of them are necessary, or He would not have given us them.

We have to learn to be forgiving and gentle, kind and patient, brave and self-denying. We have to learn these lessons, from the copy given us, by Jesus our Elder Brother. Sin is always trying to make us think that our lessons are a trouble, and that we can never learn them; and we ourselves are restless and lazy, and only too ready to believe it. Whenever there is an attempt to make you believe so, tell the tempter, whoever he be, that he is a liar! that your Father would never have given you anything to do that you could not manage: that through the spirit of Christ, which is in you, everything can be done.

Sin and selfishness will do their best to make you give up learning lessons altogether, by offering you something that is pretty or wonderful. They will say, "There is plenty of time to learn by-and-by, as you grow older: don't be in such a hurry; people never do any good who are in a hurry." Don't believe one word of it. Jesus, your Brother, was tempted in exactly the same way. Don't be induced to think you have any time to waste. You do not know how soon you may be sent for, to go home.

Try and get the first prize. How to be most like Jesus? that is the lesson given you. As for the prizes that God has ready, I cannot tell you

about them ; for they are more beautiful, than anything you have ever seen or can fancy. In that glorious country where our Father's home is, you will have such prizes, as you never could have dreamt of. Jesus will take you by the hand and lead you to His Father's throne ; and then, while thousands of thousands of beautiful angels throng around ; while your parents, brothers, and sisters, and all you have loved on earth, stand smiling on you more fondly than ever, your Father God will give to you the prize that you have won.

In that wonderful land, the sky is always bright ; there, fruits of gold droop down into the crystal waters ; there, the boys and girls play for ever in meadows, where stars are thick as daisies, and the sunshine never fades.

Jesus went up from earth to His Father's home ; and if we are like Him, one with Him, we must go there too. When the holidays will come, we do not know. Perhaps even while you are still children, God may say, "That little one is not strong enough to be long at school, he shall come home at once ;" or it may be, that He will find something for you to do, that will take many years to finish. Never trouble yourself about that ; *whenever it is time* for you to go home, our Father will send for you.

Only remember this one thing, that the lesson you have to learn here at school, is to be like Jesus.

Going to church or chapel on Sundays, or every day in the week, will not of necessity make you like Him. The scribes and great men of the Jews did that. You can grow like Him, only by obeying the voice of His spirit in your heart ; only by begging of your Father God, to make you like Him, to help you to keep down your bad temper, your inclination to be untruthful and cowardly, to make you obedient and loving. To help you give up your own will, and make others happy instead of pleasing yourself. To make you unselfish ;—if you have nice things, that you share them with your friends ;—if you have pretty things, that you give them to those who have none. And to help you do all this, without saying a word about it to any one but God ; not that people may know it, and say, “What a good child that is !” but simply, because you love Jesus, and want to be like Him. Then indeed you will grow into the very image of your Elder Brother.

You will, I am sure, often find it very difficult to be like Jesus, but never mind that. There is nothing worth having, that is not difficult to get. You will make many mistakes, often be selfish and bad-tempered : very unlike your Saviour. We are all often that, *but never, never lose heart !* When you feel how unlike Him you have been, do not sit down and cry, and say, “Oh dear ! I can never conquer these naughty tempers ; I shall never be

like Jesus. I shall never see our Father's home." Speak to God at once, wherever you are ; don't wait till you can kneel down. Say, "Dear Father, forgive me my naughtiness, make me more like Jesus, for Thy sweet love's sake." You may be tempted with the thought, "Oh, you cannot be God's little child, because you are so unlike Christ." It is a lie! Jesus has told you that you are ; be afraid of nothing ; not ten thousand devils can pluck you out of your Father's hand.

Here on earth, you know, happiness does not last long. There are partings and disappointments, that break the heart for a time. Just as you are going home from school, some one falls sick, and all the bright and pleasant plans that have been made, come to nothing ; or you yourself may be ill, and shut up alone in your room, unable for a long time to join in the pleasures you looked forward to so much. In the home of God, our Father, there will be no pain or parting. The inhabitants of that country never say, "I am sick!" Not a single cry is heard there, and God Himself wipes away tears from off all faces.

"Going home!" what glad words they are, and yet some people are positively frightened at them. Instead of talking about going home, they talk about dying, and say it is a terrible thing to die! Fancy that! "a terrible thing" to go home at once to the Father who so fondly loves you—to the Elder Brother who came to save you !

It seems a strange thing that people should be afraid of going home; but I will tell you how I think it happens. They are afraid because of that lying "If." They are not quite sure that Jesus conquered sin for ever; not quite certain that God will keep them from its power. And indeed if we had in our own strength to fight against evil, we might well be afraid. We have done so many wrong things, have been so unlike Jesus, that it is no wonder if we often fear lest we should be indeed slaves and not children. But the power of sin has been vanquished. Jesus has conquered it for us, and we have only to keep fast hold of our Father's hand, to be safe for ever!

What is called "death"—but what I wish you would think of as going home—need not be a terrible thing at all. Sometimes, it is true, there is sickness and pain with it, and if there is, you must try and remember how much Jesus suffered for you, and be glad that you can suffer something for His dear sake.

But very often, death comes without any pain at all, and very quickly. I remember a noble boy, who promised, if he had lived, to do something good and great; he was sunshine in the house, and made the hearts of his parents like summer. In the morning, he was full of health and spirits, ready to enjoy to the full, all the games and sports of the holiday; in the afternoon, he was dying from an

accident—not in pain, but calm and quiet. The next day, when he had gone home to God, his little sister came to their mamma and said, “Shall we crown him, Mamma?” Crown him! Yes, by all means, darlings; for he is a brave little soldier who has fought for Christ! He tried to be like Jesus—obedient, unselfish, and loving, and now he has gone back to his Father’s home, where they will make a wreath for him, of fadeless roses and lilies of light. Yes, crown him with many crowns; you can find none so beautiful as those which the angels have been weaving for him in heaven. Lay his body in the churchyard with a little cross over it, and let it rest quietly till Jesus comes again.

Never forget those, whether old or young, who have gone before you to our Father’s home. Do not lower your voice when you talk of them, or purposely avoid speaking of them at all. Why should you? They are only separated from you for a very little time. You don’t know, but that any day you may go to join them. So think of them just as much as if they were with you. When you talk to God at night, say their names, and thank Him that He has taken them safely to Himself.

Going home to God is dreadful to some people, because they have to go *alone*. If they had friends going at the same time, they think it would be easier. “Mamma,” said some children I know,

“why cannot we go to heaven altogether?” You will see why, if you think a minute. It is because our Father knows best when it is time for us to go. We do not all leave school at the same time; one brother or sister leaves before the others. It is not always the eldest that goes first; it is the one our Father sends for. If we had to choose ourselves when to go, we should not know how to do it. Whenever God is ready for us, He will send to fetch us. Going home to Him will not take nearly as long as you take now to go home in the train from school. You are not afraid of that!

“God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

“If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

“If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and His love is made perfect in us.”

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear.”

“I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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